

# SAFE & THRIVING COMMUNITIES

STABLE AND RESOURCED  
COMMUNITIES MAKE SAFE  
COMMUNITIES

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FOR GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK

## **SAFE AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES**

*Stable and resourced communities make safe communities.*

We know that true public safety comes when communities have what they need to thrive. Public safety is safe housing, good health care, childcare, reliable transportation, and living-wage jobs—not overpolicing, arrests, incarceration, and surveillance.

The fact is every New Yorker has a right to be safe, and to feel safe. That means we have to reject fear-mongering and to invest in community-oriented and evidence-based solutions that we know can work to create stability in our neighborhoods, prevent gun violence, and save lives. It's critical that we resist knee-jerk reactions that could return us to failed, damaging policies of the past.

Gun violence in our communities is a serious national crisis that has been exacerbated amid the compounding public health and economic catastrophes brought on by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, cities across New York had worked over the previous decade to bring levels of violence to historic lows, in part due to a pivot away from focusing endlessly on punitive systems of criminalization and towards more holistic, community-centered approaches. Now, as the devastation of the pandemic has also brought greater instability and a corresponding uptick in violence, we must have a renewed and strengthened commitment to implement approaches that are both effective and moral.

It is not enough to return to the pre-pandemic “normal,” and we have a moral obligation to go further to end gun and other interpersonal violence, reimagining and redefining public safety to encompass a broad approach to building up communities. By both directly addressing the issues fueling violence and reshaping the systems and structures from which it takes root, we can build safer, stronger communities. We must shift away from existing approaches that rely and focus on an arrest-and-incarcerate approach, which has too often failed and inflicted greater and lasting harm.

As governor and lieutenant governor, we will be champions for common-sense solutions and greater investments in families and communities to prevent gun violence before it needlessly takes lives and causes even greater harm. We are asking our police to do too much and it's costing lives. Community-oriented solutions that involve highly trained conflict resolution professionals and other members of the community will allow us to connect residents in need to mental health, job training, and other important resources to save lives and promote public safety for every community.

We will treat gun violence like the emergency that it is and rapidly get greater resources out the door as quickly and effectively as possible to community partners and agencies doing the work. We will ensure that these funds will be earmarked across the gun violence prevention continuum to address root causes, create opportunities for at-risk New Yorkers, and intervene when necessary. And finally, historic and aggressive investment in the long-term health, economic, and housing infrastructure of our state coming out of this pandemic are necessary components to advance safety across the state.

## **10-POINT PLAN FOR SAFE AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES**

1. **Invest one billion dollars** statewide in underfunded **gun violence prevention, youth programming, and victims' services** programs
2. Build a **statewide mental health** infrastructure so all New Yorkers can access mental health services and supports in their communities
3. Develop a **state program of trauma response** for communities and neighborhoods ripped apart by violence
4. Invest greater resources for community-based strategies to **prevent and address interpersonal violence** such as hate crimes, domestic violence, and sexual violence
5. **Implement a housing, jobs, and infrastructure investment plan** in the neighborhoods across New York State with the highest amounts of gun violence and overdose deaths
6. **Stop the flow of guns** into communities by focusing on the supply chain of weapons
7. **Defend hard fought civil rights reforms** and **dismantle the racial injustices** plaguing our criminal justice system
8. **End the failed war on drugs** upstate and downstate and invest in compassionate care and support for people and communities
9. Ensure **accountable, transparent, and focused policing**, so they are responding to acute situations that specifically require law enforcement, not matters like routine traffic stops, mental health response, or addressing poverty
10. **Disrupt cycles of incarceration and instability** by providing currently and formerly incarcerated New Yorkers with support and resources

- **Invest one billion dollars statewide in underfunded gun violence prevention, youth programs, and victims' services.**

For far too long, we have grossly underfunded community-oriented programs that have been [proven, both locally and nationally, to help reduce violence](#). The status quo of spending billions upon billions of dollars on arrests, prosecutions, and imprisonment has simply not worked to reduce, let alone end, the unacceptable levels of violence facing too many New Yorkers each night. Meanwhile, we are shortchanging life-saving violence prevention and important youth and victims' services programs and systems. Indeed, many cities and areas in New York state have little to no programming at all for either community-based gun violence intervention or youth and survivor programs. This needs to change quickly. It's why we are calling for a **one billion dollar immediate investment—this year—in violence prevention, youth programs, and victims' services**.

With this historic, but necessary, funding, we can finally launch at scale community violence prevention and victims' services programs outside of New York City, and institutionalize pilot programs operating in the five boroughs that have already shown great success and promise. In Brooklyn, a [pilot project](#), the Brownsville Safety Alliance had violence interrupter and crisis management groups watching over a two-block zone that had been an epicenter of conflict and violence in the community. During the period in which the pilot operated, no shootings and no violence of any kind was reported. There are countless other examples from across the country that New York should be replicating and investing its resources in. With a large state commitment, we can rapidly scale up support evidence-based programs including groups such as [Advance Peace](#), and deploy a statewide public safety corps of credible messengers, conflict resolution professionals, school counselors, and restorative justice practitioners so that violence *prevention* become the norm and not the exception in every corner of our state. The status quo also fails crime victims who are often left dissatisfied or traumatized by the way our criminal legal system operates. We need to increase resources and services for crime victims and their families to stabilize and support them in their healing.

We also need to truly invest in our young people. That includes providing our young people with the world-class education and schools they deserve, but also to create space in their lives for joy, exploration and community. As part of a billion dollar investment in community-level public safety, we can dramatically increase and make permanent funds for summer youth job programs, after school programming, youth counseling, and deescalation peer programming. We need to ensure every child in this

state has the same opportunities for learning and stability, regardless of their circumstances and zip code. We should also pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act to begin finally dismantling and reversing the school-to-prison pipeline for Black and brown young people.

- Build a comprehensive **statewide mental health** infrastructure so all New Yorkers can access mental health services and supports in their communities

Mental healthcare and treatment should not only exist for the wealthy or for those mandated or already in deep distress. We must work to continue building a robust infrastructure that allows every New Yorker to access quality mental health care in their communities.

We need a *New Deal* level approach to mental health in New York State, engaging the full weight of state and federal resources and additional tax revenue from the wealthiest New Yorkers, to develop a modern, robust infrastructure and culture of collective care in our state. To begin, we should immediately increase the budgets of the Office of Mental Health and other state health agencies to hire additional staff and support current careworker teams who are doing courageous work under incredibly challenging circumstances. But New York must also dramatically expand the services, spaces, and reach of our public mental health care system by investing billions in new capital expenditures and long-term infrastructure spending. We must meet this moment and our current crises with the urgency and boldness that they require.

In order to address our safety challenges, as well as strengthening the social fabric coming out of this pandemic, New York needs to address the immediate crises facing our state and plan for the future. This includes building a new network of and dramatically increasing funding for existing community mental health clinics; sending large-scale resources to increase the numbers of counselors in every school across the state; and funding mobile units and specialized street-level care workers who can do mental health outreach.

We must fund and scale-up Supportive Housing systems across the state by investing at least \$820 million to operate 20,000 new units of supportive housing, [far less than the cost to hold New Yorkers in jails and prisons](#). Housing is healthcare and the first step to stability. New York's supportive housing system has saved and improved untold lives, but must be dramatically scaled up to meet the massive need. Currently, only 1 in 4 New York City residents approved for supportive housing are able to access it. Outside of New York City, accessibility is even worse. Supportive Housing [breaks the cycle of](#)

[homelessness](#) by pairing permanent housing with on-site services for people with a history of substance use, and/or who have mental and physical health.

A New Deal level approach to mental health would be a top priority for the Williams-Archila administration. Coordinating with public health systems experts, federal partners, and community leaders, and with an unapologetic commitment to securing the necessary funds by making the wealthiest among us pay their fair share, New York can build a state of the art, multi-prong mental health care system that will serve us all and our collective safety.

We must also end the criminalization of mental health and poverty. For far too long, we have relied on policing and the criminal justice system to address the gaps and absence of mental health infrastructure in our communities—something that has wholly failed to keep New York healthy or safe. A [report from 2018](#) found that the cost of incarceration of the nearly 9,000 people in prison with serious mental illness in the state of New York exceeded \$500 million per year. Through a different approach, we can begin shifting the dollars we spend on incarceration to developing a robust community mental health system in New York. Additionally, by investing heavily in a real mental health and care infrastructure, we can keep police from responding to mental health concerns and homelessness outreach, and allow them to focus on acute situations and investigating serious crimes such as homicides, shootings, and serial sexual assaults.

- Develop a **state program of trauma response** for communities and neighborhoods ripped apart by violence.

Incidents of violence such as shootings, murders, or serious assaults are traumatic, not only for crime victims and their families, but entire communities. This trauma, when left unacknowledged and unaddressed, often produces ongoing harm in a number of ways, including family destabilization, community suffering, and retaliatory violence.

A Williams-Archila administration would develop and resource a comprehensive state program would allow for a state and local coordinated trauma response to incidents of violence. Such a program could be funded at \$25 million annually, in large part by utilizing the large amounts of federal dollars being granted to states for public safety as part of annual budgets and as part of ongoing COVID relief. It would include scaling up and investing in initiatives such as the deployment of community-led Mobile Trauma units into neighborhoods and to dramatically expand Hospital Based Violence Intervention programs (HVIPs) such as the [program in Jacobi Hospital](#) in the Bronx, which have been shown to be [remarkably successful](#) in reducing retaliatory violence. A

state trauma program can send response teams of culturally competent health professionals, counselors and credible messengers into neighborhoods after incidents of gun violence to help families and communities heal from violence and prevent unnecessary violence that often follows other acts of violence.

- Invest greater resources for community-based strategies to **prevent and address interpersonal violence** such as hate crimes, domestic violence, interpersonal violence and sexual violence

We need to address and stop the recent uptick in hate crimes and stand with communities across the state who've experienced horrific acts of unacceptable violence. We will never be able to stop and prevent every terrible act, but we can and must do more. New York must devise a reimagined approach to ending domestic and interpersonal violence, and should deploy \$50 million in state resources for prevention, response, and accountability programs.

This includes having state and local agencies partner with community organizations, interfaith spaces, and culturally competent organizations such as Stop AAPI Hate, the Asian American Federation, and the Center for Anti-Violence Education. New York should be working closely and where appropriate, partnering with grassroots organizations and faith institutions to expand local community-leader and clergy-led efforts to interrupt hate violence before it begins.

We should create a state Survivors Justice fund that can help people fleeing violent experiences in their home and allow them to quickly receive the social and housing supports they may need. We should also provide a statewide restorative justice option for people seeking non-law enforcement pathways to pursue accountability in response to incidents of sexual violence. Finally, we need to pass the Adult Survivors Act in New York State, creating space for adult survivors of child sexual abuse to pursue justice.

- **Implement a housing, jobs, and infrastructure investment plan** in the neighborhoods across New York State with the highest amounts of gun violence and overdose deaths

Tragically, much of the violence New York is experiencing occurs repeatedly in many of the same communities and zip codes. We need to develop a real, targeted plan to structurally address the violence and instability that has affected these communities,

most of which have been equally ravaged by violence AND disinvestment from the state.

We propose a unique \$2 million Housing, Jobs, and Infrastructure plan for each of these neighborhoods that will help allow communities to bloom into safe, resilient and healthy sites for the future. *Instead of broken windows policing, let's fix the broken windows.*

Targeted investments in supportive and affordable housing, living wage jobs, and neighborhood level infrastructure improvements including [better lighting](#), sanitation, parks, public transit, and even [tree planting](#) would serve the health and well-being of these communities. These types of community investments have been shown to have direct improvements on public safety and perceptions of safety.

We must also ensure that a *Housing, Job, and Infrastructure* plan for each location includes specific and long-term investments in our young people—inside and outside of school. Improving school infrastructure such as ensuring water fountains, lead-free paint, as well as after school programming and summer jobs, are clear pathways and obligations to both protect and improve the lives of our young people and increase safety in communities.

- **End the flow of guns into communities by focusing on the supply chain**

There are simply too many guns in our nation that make their way onto our streets. But for too long, we have pursued an overly narrow, punitive, and ineffective strategy of bringing the full weight of the criminal legal system on individuals who possess guns unlawfully. There must be accountability for those who are planning or engaging in violence, but we must pursue a broader and more comprehensive strategy and do all we can to break the so-called [Iron Pipeline](#) of interstate weapons and ammunition flow.

It is necessary for our leaders to work closely on the federal, state, and city levels to truly address this crisis and the seemingly endless supply of guns and ammunition making their way into our communities. We must start aggressively coordinating with federal partners to examine how to restrict, target and hold liable gun manufacturers who continue to profit off the endless production of weapons and ammunition that ultimately make their way into New York State. We can start by expanding on New York's [important work](#) in holding gun manufacturers and their lobbyists financially accountable for the proliferation of guns. But we should broaden this effort and examine the role of the [financial industry](#), investment banks, hedge funds, and other powerful institutions in fueling gun proliferation and gun violence. We must finally [take a](#)



[courageous and aggressive posture](#) against those entities who are, in essence, profiting off of gun violence and the suffering of our communities.

At the same time, cities and localities must pursue and engage in smart, novel interventions that don't simply mean an endless stream of low-level arrests, an approach that has been an abject failure in stopping gun violence and instead fueled greater instability and mass incarceration. We should continue to invest greater resources in gun violence reduction groups such as [Guns Down, Life Up](#) and continue coordinating with district attorneys in gun buyback programs. We should also pursue grassroots initiatives such as the Human Justice Model, that calls upon large companies to invest in and support communities most affected by gun violence, including through paying employees a living wage, engaging young people with employment opportunities, and utilizing their power to support programs and platforms that are proven to play a role in making communities safer.

- **Defend hard fought civil rights reforms and end the racial injustices plaguing our criminal justice system**

Despite our country's core principle of "innocent until proven guilty", more than three-quarters of New York City's jail population has not been convicted of a crime. Our current system makes it so that lower-income people awaiting trial are disproportionately held in detention due to inability to pay cash bail, while wealthier people charged with the same offenses can avoid detention due to their financial means. All of this also has widespread racial disparities, particularly against the Black community.

In 2019, the State took key steps to rectify this fundamental injustice by passing comprehensive bail reform legislation that eliminated bail for most misdemeanors and non-violent offenses. However, fear-mongering and sensationalism led to these reforms being rolled back almost immediately after they took effect, making dozens more of offenses bail-eligible. And we are again in the same situation today with the right wing misinformation machine and many state leaders capitulating to fear, instead of [facts](#).

We must defend our bail reform laws, ensure the right to a speedy trial, and stop incarcerating New Yorkers for simply being poor. Instead of increasing the numbers of poor people being thrown in jail for shoplifting or repeat "quality of life" offenses as some have called for, we should be investing in greater pretrial services both in NYC and especially upstate.

Our reflexive overwhelming focus on incarceration as our response to advancing safety and accountability has [simply not worked](#) to reduce violence or address poverty, and

has instead caused family separations and destabilized whole generations of New Yorkers and their communities. Indeed, the localities in New York with the highest levels of incarcerated community members are often the most unstable. Reuniting families and keeping communities whole will lead to greater safety in the long term for all of us.

To begin with, New York State needs to implement reforms that end overly punitive parole enforcement that unnecessarily re-incarcerates New Yorkers who have served their time and work to significantly lower the number of aging New Yorkers who are incarcerated. Research has consistently shown that incarcerated people over the age 50 are extremely unlikely to commit harm if released. Despite this, the number of people in this demographic in New York prisons has doubled over the past two decades, to over 10,000. In order to provide these New Yorkers with an opportunity to avoid virtual life sentences, the State should pass the [Elder Parole Act and Fair and Timely Parole Act](#).

Finally, the City and State should look to expand the positive impact of its Alternative to Detention and Alternative to Incarceration programs, which have [helped reduce prison and jail populations](#) by diverting offenders to targeted services including mental health and substance use treatment, vocational and educational support and development, and trauma-informed counseling.

New York must finally close Rikers, and in the immediate term address the humanitarian crisis that has been unfolding in that wretched facility. We are appalled by the ever-worsening physical and sexual violence against staff and incarcerated persons. Individuals are forced to go without the most basic health and safety needs, sometimes going days, even weeks, without showers, functional toilets, medication, and medical attention. Even access to food and running water is sometimes limited. This is a moral abomination and we must do all we can to limit the numbers of people being held in the facility. Longer term, we need to, and can, reduce New York state incarceration by at least 50% in ten years through greater pretrial services, sentencing reform, parole reform, and by addressing the root causes of violence and harm as the rest of our safety plan lays out. It's time to make New York a leader in both safety and justice.

- **End the failed war on drugs** upstate and downstate and invest in compassionate care and support for people and communities

The overdose crisis - and failed drug war policies - impacts communities of all races, and people of all political stripes. In New York State, the overdose crisis impacts urban, suburban and rural communities. Our nation is facing the worst overdose crisis in history, and sadly it's only accelerating. In just 12 months, over 100,000 people died. We are losing one New Yorker every hour and 48 minutes. The crisis hits some

communities harder than others, but every community is facing historically high overdose deaths, criminalization and a lack of adequate services and care. To end the surging overdose crisis, we need to replace criminalization and incarceration with a compassionate and caring approach rooted in science and evidence-based solutions, over deadly and harmful stigma.

The overdose crisis is a racial justice issue. In NYC, the neighborhoods with the highest overdose rates are those that are in very high poverty - specifically the South Bronx and Harlem - which are also highly policed. Overdose rates continue to surge for Black and brown New Yorkers, while white New Yorkers overdose rates have stabilized or decreased. Access to services and treatment for communities hardest hit remain fraught with barriers. New York State can reverse the harms of the failed drug war, ensure all communities feel safe, stay alive, and receive the care they need - but it will take leaders having the political will and commitment to end the harms of criminalization and invest in caring infrastructure.

New York State played its own critical role in the drug war. Most infamously through the enactment of the draconian Rockefeller drug laws that were adopted across the nation and federally and exploded the prison population and incarcerating Black and brown communities. Although the Rockefeller drug laws have been repealed, criminalization over care is still very alive in New York State.

Most critical to ending the current overdose crisis is ensuring every New Yorker has on-demand access to [evidence-based care and treatment](#), including [harm reduction](#) services and Medication-Assisted Treatment. We also need to end the criminalization of low level drug possession, which has led to New York treating drug use as a criminal matter instead of a public health one.

We must invest in the Office of Drug User Health in the AIDS Institute, and continue to grow the agency's budget to scale-up capacity of harm reduction services, overdose prevention, and low-threshold models of Medication-Assisted Treatment. We should also allow the New York State Department of Health to authorize community-based organizations to operate as safer consumption spaces (SCS), also known as Overdose Prevention Centers, which offer sterile supplies and controlled settings for people to use pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of trained professionals who can intervene in case of an overdose or other medical event, and link people to counseling, and referrals to health and social services, including drug treatment.

- Ensure **accountable, transparent, and focused policing**, so they are responding to acute situations that specifically require law enforcement, not matters like routine traffic stops, mental health response, or addressing poverty

Policing has a critical role to play when a law enforcement response is needed to respond to real-time violent and acute situations. Police must also be freed up to investigate and resolve serious crimes such as homicides, shootings, and serial sexual assaults.

But right now, that is [often not what police officers and departments are spending their resources addressing](#). Too often, we are asking our police departments to do too much—a dynamic that is both bad for police officers and communities. Indeed, the last few years have shown us how tenuous the relationship between policing and the communities they serve continues to be. In addition to matters of accountability and transparency, we must also refocus the very role of policing to help advance safety in communities.

Being homeless is [not a crime](#). Yet, instead of providing targeted support that addresses the roots of the problem, the State has increased the roles of local policing like the NYPD, and the MTA Police in its strategies to address homelessness in New York City in recent years. This expansion of police into the social services sector is outside of these agencies' missions to enforce the law. As New York fundamentally re-evaluates what public safety means, law enforcement agencies should be removed from providing primary homeless services.

The issue of transit affordability is deeply intertwined with criminal justice, as the NYPD and MTA Police currently choose to address fare evasion through arrests and summonses. The City and State should end this punitive approach to fare evasion. It does not make public transportation safer—it simply criminalizes low-income New Yorkers and results in unnecessary and costly involvement with the justice system. Further, NYPD data shows that fare evasion enforcement is disproportionately implemented in communities of more color, and that Black and Latinx New Yorkers are more likely than their counterparts to be arrested, rather than issued a summons, for skipping the fare. Expanding Fair Fares to cover 100% of fare costs for the lowest income New Yorkers is a much more equitable and efficient solution to reducing fare evasion.

When mental health crises do occur, the State must focus its efforts on providing those in crisis with the services they need to avert immediate danger and advance to quick recovery. These services are best provided by those who specialize in them: social workers, medics, and mental health peers; not law enforcement officers who specialize

in addressing crime. We can replicate successful models of comprehensive, professional mental health responses to support people suffering from mental health crises across the state, drawing on local pilots and [national examples](#).

As Governor and Lt. Governor, we would require local jurisdictions seeking state funds to put forth comprehensive *public safety* plans, not simply policing reform plans, that demonstrate how these localities would rely on both law enforcement and community-based strategies.

To carry out their law enforcement responsibilities effectively, police departments across the state must also address and dismantle the systemic injustices that have long plagued policing by making the following transformations—all of which also increase public safety, including:

- Minimize use of force upon civilians
- Create and implement real accountability for officers who discriminate against New Yorkers or use excessive force
- Ensure use of technology does not further discrimination and over-surveillance
- Create strong independent local oversight over policing, drawing on lessons from agencies like New York City's CCRB and Inspector General, and models like the community oversight board in Rochester
- Implement 'Community CompStat' Models with deeper data-sharing and collaboration between law enforcement, other government agencies, and community stakeholders

**10. End cycles of incarceration and instability by providing incarcerated and formerly incarcerated New Yorkers with support and resources**—providing healthcare, employment, educational, and reentry support for those returning home from incarceration

While we work to cut off the numerous pipelines that feed into the mass incarceration system, we must also improve the conditions of those who are incarcerated and work to ensure that our penal system is centered around rehabilitation rather than punishment. Creating dignified educational and employment opportunities for those in prison is the right and moral thing to do, but will also make their return home more seamless – something that is good for safety and communities and can help end the brutal cycles of incarceration that too many New Yorkers and their families experience.

Rehabilitation and well-being must be at the center of the function of correctional facilities. For this to occur, these facilities must be staffed with an adequate number of social workers. Connection with loved ones is also critical to the mental and emotional

well-being of incarcerated New Yorkers. Especially with the current pandemic making in-person visits an impossibility, we must strengthen access to videoconferencing.

Those who work for the State while incarcerated carry out important work, including producing much-needed hand sanitizer for the public during the current pandemic. Yet, these New Yorkers make an average of \$0.65 per hour, which amounts to less than 5% of the State's minimum wage. The Governor is now proposing that incarcerated labor be contracted out to private corporations. This racialized exploitation of prison labor must end. In incentivizing the continuation of mass incarceration and failing to humanely compensate workers, New York is, quite simply, extending of the legacy of slavery.

Instead of this backward approach, New York should end forced labor, guarantee fair wages, and ensure robust employment protections for incarcerated people. The State should pass a Real Wages for All New Yorkers Act that would ensure that prison labor is compensated at the State minimum wage. The State should additionally pass The Freedom From Forced Labor Act, which would ensure that all prison labor occurs voluntarily and with dignity, without any form of coercion. Until these needed reforms are made, the State must stop forcing municipalities, including New York City, to contract with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) for needed supplies.

Further, New York must make a number of reforms to the commissary system to eliminate exploitation of incarcerated New Yorkers and their families. First, the State must pass legislation which would repeal the unjust law requiring commissaries to make a profit via markups on goods and replace it with a mandate for commissaries to sell goods at market price. Second, the DOC must establish a cost-free remote mechanism by which members of the public can remotely deposit money into a facility resident's commissary account. Currently, the only way to deposit money to a facility resident's DOC account without incurring a fee is in person at a DOC cashier's window.

The DOC must significantly improve the programming it provides to those in its custody. In order to do so, it must provide detailed plans and reporting regarding its legal obligation to provide five hours of daily programming to incarcerated New Yorkers. To ensure that all residents have access to these programs, all facilities should provide menus that lay out what programs are offered.

Finally, New York must provide comprehensive resources and infrastructure for New Yorkers returning back home from prison. Again, this is the right thing to do, but also critical for our collective public safety. New York must increase resources for formerly incarcerated New Yorkers, particularly investing in guaranteed transitional housing that

has wrap-around services including mental health treatment, job training, and peer counseling.

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