About Arnold Ventures

We focus on correcting system failures through evidence-based solutions. Viewing philanthropy as an engine of innovation, we identify problems, rigorously research them, and search for answers. Once an idea is tested, validated, and proven efficacious, we fund policy development and technical assistance to create change that outlasts our funding.

Arnold Ventures manages the giving for the various Arnold entities, including the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Action Now Initiative, and the Arnolds’ donor-advised fund. We are a team of more than 90 subject-matter experts headquartered in Houston with offices in New York and Washington, D.C. We work in four key issue areas: Criminal Justice, Education, Health, and Public Finance. Our work is guided by Evidence-Based Policy, Research, and Advocacy.

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Arnold Ventures (AV)

Description:
Arnold Ventures is a philanthropy dedicated to tackling some of the most pressing problems in the United States. We invest in sustainable change, building it from the ground up based on research, deep thinking, and a strong foundation of evidence. We drive public conversation, craft policy, and inspire action through education and advocacy.

Stakeholder(s):

Arnold Ventures Team:
Arnold Ventures is a group of more than 80 passionate people from all walks of life who feel a deep urgency to help people in need. Laura and John established the Laura and John Arnold Foundation in 2010 with a straightforward mission: to improve lives through evidence-based solutions. As co-founders, Laura and John actively engage in the organization’s overall direction and daily execution. Laura is an attorney and a former oil company executive. John is an investor. They have three children and reside in Houston, Texas.

Laura Arnold:
Laura and John established the Laura and John Arnold Foundation in 2010. They believe philanthropy should be transformational and should seek through innovation to solve persistent problems in society. As co-founders, Laura and John actively engage in the organization’s overall direction and daily execution. Laura is an attorney and a former oil company executive... They have three children and reside in Houston, Texas.

John Arnold:
John is an investor.

Kelli Rhee:
President and Chief Executive Officer — Kelli is the president and chief executive officer of Arnold Ventures. She leads the philanthropy in its mission to employ strategic entrepreneurial philanthropy to address some of society’s most complex and urgent challenges. Prior to joining Arnold Ventures, Kelli served in numerous strategic and entrepreneurial roles in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. She began her career as a management consultant with Bain & Company and The Bridgespan Group. After graduate school, Kelli worked in both entrepreneurial and venture capital settings as an operational leader, strategic investor, and adviser. Most recently, she was part of a team that led the creation and launch of a new academic medical center for Baylor College of Medicine. Kelli holds an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business, an M.A. in education from the Stanford Graduate School of Education, and a B.A. in economics from Northwestern University.

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Arnold Ventures

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Vision
Opportunity maximized, injustice minimized

Mission
To invest in and improve lives through evidence-based solutions

Values
  Community Safety
  Fairness
  Effectiveness
Racial Justice
Life
Dignity
Constitutional Rights
Human Rights
Equity
Autonomy
Justice
1. Criminal Justice

**Advance community safety and the values of fairness, effectiveness, and racial justice**

We strive to advance community safety and the values of fairness, effectiveness, and racial justice. America’s criminal justice system strips too many people of their jobs, families, health, and dignity. It puts people of color at risk, disproportionately harms low-income people, limits the potential of juveniles caught in the system, and doesn’t give everyone the opportunities they need to get back on track. And it does all this at an enormous cost to taxpayers. Our work in criminal justice is about changing the system to improve people’s lives. Are people being treated fairly without regard to race or income? Is there an underlying issue like substance use disorder or mental illness that the system is unable to address? To get a clear picture, we look at interactions with the justice system from start to finish — policing and pretrial, probation and parole, prison reform, and reintegration — and engage with experts and those directly affected to explore new policies and practices.

1.1. Policing

*Promote public safety with reverence for life and dignity, and by upholding constitutional and human rights of all persons regardless of race, ethnicity, identity, or economic status.*

Law enforcement must act in service to communities by promoting public safety with reverence for life and dignity, and by upholding constitutional and human rights of all persons regardless of race, ethnicity, identity, or economic status. American policing is at a crossroads, with many challenges standing in the way of reform. Over the years, the role of policing expanded as other services were cut back, leaving the police to take on deep-rooted social problems such as homelessness and mental illness for which other community providers are better equipped to handle. Police too often rely on punitive enforcement, particularly against Black, Brown and Indigenous people, which has inflicted deep harm on the communities they serve and has led to deteriorating trust in law enforcement. A lack of transparency and accountability, along with a failure to confront both historic and current racism in policing, has resulted in a law enforcement system that is often unreceptive to change and too frequently falls short of its fundamental task of protecting and serving all communities fairly. We believe that policing should be a democratically accountable, professionalized, public service rather than a “force.” Police departments should reduce their reliance on punitive measures such as arrest and use of force. Successful policing is community-centered and holds racial equity, inclusion, and trust-building as a core philosophy of its mission. Community members should play an active role in influencing the direction and mission of their police service, and police departments should be sized appropriately to meet community needs. Through our Alternatives to Arrest portfolio, we seek to improve responses to vulnerable populations and reduce low-level arrests by supporting evidence-based research on arrest alternatives, eliminating racial disparities in enforcement tactics, and dismantling legal and regulatory barriers to reform. Our emerging portfolios focused on gun violence research and reducing violent crime seek to treat violence like a public health crisis, building the evidence base for effective strategies to reduce violence and promote effective policing. We are also working with policymakers, practitioners, and advocates to explore opportunities to increase police accountability and transparency, improve diversity in policing, and promote lasting culture change.

1.2. Probation & Parole

*Shift in the focus of community supervision from catching failure to promoting success.*

More effective — and more fair — probation and parole will lead to safer communities and reduced corrections costs. Nationwide, 4.5 million people — or 1 in 55 — are on probation or parole. Community supervision has evolved into one of the largest drivers of prison admissions in many states, as hundreds of thousands are behind bars each year because they violate the terms of their probation or parole. These high failure rates mean we’re missing opportunities for crime prevention in some cases and over-punishing people in others, often over rule violations. To improve public safety, promote better outcomes for people on probation and parole, and decrease
the costs associated with returns to prison and jail, we need a fundamental shift in the focus of community supervision from catching failure to promoting success. We support research to better understand the reasons for probation and parole violations and how we can reduce them, as well as advocacy that uncovers and remedies economic and racial disparities. We’re also working to help implement evidence-based practices and state policy change that ensure the right people are on supervision and the interventions they receive address their risks and needs.

1.3. Pre-Trial Justice

*Ensure that every person who has contact with the justice system is afforded equal treatment under the law.*

We must reform every aspect of the pretrial system—from policing to bail; prosecution to public defense—to ensure that every person who has contact with the justice system is afforded equal treatment under the law. We support policies that decarcerate, protect individuals’ constitutional rights, advance community safety, and promote racial justice. On any given day, there are more than 730,000 people sitting in jails across America. Two-thirds have not been convicted of a crime and are trapped in jail simply because they can’t afford bail. The recent—and massive—surge in America’s pretrial jail populations has multiple roots: law enforcement agencies that arrest more people for minor offenses and over-police communities of color; prosecutors’ offices that seek harsh punishments and don’t collect data on the impact of those practices on families and communities; public defenders that are so overburdened they can’t possibly offer clients the zealous representation guaranteed in the Constitution; and judges who have little information with which to make life-altering decisions, so fall back on money bail to decide who gets released and who gets detained. We work directly with courts, judges, prosecutors, and public defenders to implement and evaluate transformative new practices in pretrial justice. We have invested in a wide array of reforms, including robust pretrial support services to improve court appearance rates; data collection to increase transparency and accountability in prosecutors’ offices; and evidence-based workload limits for public defenders. To accelerate this research, learning, and policy development, Arnold Ventures has established the National Partnership for Pretrial Justice—a grant-supported community of researchers, technical assistance providers, policy experts, and advocates—focused on eliminating unjust pretrial detention.
1.4. Prisons

*Transform culture, improve conditions, and reduce the reach of our corrections system.*

We will work with partners to develop bold ideas to transform culture, improve conditions, and reduce the reach of our corrections system. The United States is home to 5 percent of the world’s population and nearly 25 percent of its prisoners, and our prisons are excessively punitive, often subjecting people to inhumane conditions. We incarcerate people of color at disproportionately higher rates. And because few prisons offer treatment, job training, or cultures of respect and dignity, many people are set up to fail when they come home. Working with partners, we’re developing an ambitious strategy for reforming state and federal prisons. As prisons are among the most understudied and opaque public institutions in our country, we are exploring opportunities to invest in projects that can effect change. We want to open these institutions to public view, develop cultures of respect and dignity, safely reduce the prison population, and better prepare people for success in their communities. And we’re interested in working with state governments to make reentry more successful, particularly when it comes to improving health care, education, and employment prospects, both in prison and after release.

**Stakeholder(s):**

Prisons

1.5. Reintegration

*Minimize barriers to successful reintegration.*

We will support strategies to reorient the justice system in ways that minimize barriers to successful reintegration — for those involved in and impacted by crime. As a society, we pay little attention to helping people who have been harmed by crime get back on track. We also place such significant obstacles in the way of people with convictions that it can be nearly impossible for them to find jobs, housing, and fully participate in civic life. And we barely recognize that others impacted by criminal behavior, such as children who witness violence, have also suffered. We’re supporting efforts to redesign our justice system in ways that not only provide a path to opportunity for those in the justice system, but also help communities and those harmed by crime heal and flourish. To that end, we aim to remove policy barriers to reintegration — such as housing, voting, and job restrictions, as well as excessive fines and fees — for people who have served their time and made amends, so they can access and fully contribute to society. We’re making significant investments in reforming fines and fees that punish poverty. In the future, we’ll work to remove the barriers that victims face and connect them with resources they need to be made whole.
2. Health

Lower health care spending while ensuring access to high-quality care

Health care in the United States is more expensive than in any other country in the world, yet the nation’s overall health doesn’t reflect that level of investment. Our system results in uncoordinated and often unaffordable care for patients; inequities exist among communities; and special interests and market manipulations have inflated costs. Health care: Our work aims to lower health care spending while ensuring access to high-quality care. We seek to lower prices consumers face, reduce low-value and potentially harmful care, and improve care for complex patients. Public health: We work to remove barriers that impede people’s right to care by supporting the training of providers, research on public programs, and state-based efforts to broaden treatment and preventative services. We are currently focused on addressing the opioid epidemic, expanding reproductive care, and improving nutrition.

2.1. Opioid Epidemic

Treat opioid use disorder as a public health issue, not a criminal justice problem.

Opioid use disorder should be treated as a public health issue, not a criminal justice problem. More than 49,000 people died of an opioid overdose in 2017, making it one of the deadliest public health crises in the U.S. Of the millions suffering, most don’t have access to high-quality treatment that could help them manage their disease. Among the barriers: a lack of quality treatment facilities, gaps in insurance coverage, and public policies that criminalize addiction. We want to save lives and reduce the economic, social, and criminal justice costs of the opioid epidemic. Research shows that a combination of medication and behavioral support is the most effective way to treat the disorder, and we also support efforts to reorient care around chronic disease management practices. In an effort to prevent overdose deaths, we also fund research on interventions such as naloxone and syringe distribution programs.

2.2. Contraceptives

Promote equity, autonomy, and justice in the reproductive health care system.

Women have a right to high-quality reproductive care and should be able to make their own health decisions. Choices about birth control and reproductive health are often driven by the health care system rather than the patient. Millions of women lack access to a reproductive health provider, while economic, social, and political factors affect the quality of care some receive. And many providers don’t offer all birth control options, leading to inequitable treatment. We are working to promote equity, autonomy, and justice in the reproductive health care system by expanding access to contraception, closing gaps in reproductive health care coverage, and informing women about their contraception options. We aim to learn more about the issues that affect women who have been disenfranchised by the health care system. And our grants include technical assistance to state governments, funding for programs that provide same-day access to birth control, and research about how to improve access.

2.3. Drug Prices

Lower drug prices while maintaining incentives for innovation.

Prescription drugs and therapies must be affordable and accessible for patients, employers, and taxpayers. The U.S. drug-pricing system is filled with market failures. High launch prices and unjustified price increases, market distortions, and anti-competitive behaviors by drug manufacturers lead to rising drug costs, a lack of price competition, and government-granted monopolies that allow drug manufacturers to set prices at will. The result is drug prices that are rising and expected to grow faster than most other major health care goods and
services by the end of the next decade, with total national drug spending expected to increase by 62 percent over the same period. We aim to lower drug prices to reduce costs for patients, employers, and taxpayers, while also maintaining appropriate incentives for meaningful drug innovation. We focus on evidence-based solutions that address the key drivers of high drug pricing and spending: patent abuses and anti-competitive behaviors that thwart competition; market distortions supported by perverse incentives and lack of transparency; and high launch prices and unjustified price increases affecting public and private payers. We believe that the United States can remain at the forefront of pharmaceutical research and innovation while also ensuring that life-saving treatments are affordable and accessible to all.

**Stakeholder(s):**

- Patients
- Taxpayers
- Employers

### 2.4. Commercial Sector Prices

*Lower the prices paid for hospital and physician services.*

Visiting the hospital or doctor’s office should not be a devastating blow to the family budget. Increased consolidation among providers over the past few decades is driving up costs, which has put a severe strain on family finances and added higher costs for employers and the government. Charges and fees often appear inflated, and the U.S. pays top dollar for almost every service when compared with other countries. In order to improve affordability and access to high-quality care, we seek to lower the prices paid for hospital and physician services. We are working to protect patients and payers from surprise bills, develop approaches to reduce the prices charged by providers with strong market power, and investigate and expose anti-competitive practices in the market. This would help lower the out-of-pocket costs and premiums consumers face.

**Stakeholder(s):**

- Patients
- Physicians
- Hospitals
2.5. Complex Care

*Increase coordination of care for dual-eligible beneficiaries.*

When health care is fragmented, patients suffer and costs go up. People are healthier — physically and mentally — when their care is coordinated and their full needs are met. Health care in the U.S. is broken and disjointed — and nowhere is that more apparent than among a population of individuals who have some of the most significant care needs in the country. About 12 million people in the U.S. are covered by both Medicare and Medicaid. These so-called “dual eligible” individuals account for a disproportionately high share of government health spending and often experience poor health outcomes. Medicare and Medicaid are two different programs that cover different services and are operated by different arms of the government. Separate rules, processes, providers, and benefits make the system difficult to navigate. Our aim is to increase coordination of care for dual-eligible beneficiaries by promoting evidence-based models that provide seamless and integrated care across the continuum of services, including acute care, long-term support services, home care, behavioral health and social services needs. We back the development of state and federal policies that can improve this coordination.

**Stakeholder(s):**

Medicare  Medicaid
3. Education

*Empower individuals and communities through access to high-quality education*

We believe in empowering individuals and communities through access to high-quality education. High-quality education is the engine of social mobility and should be accessible to learners of all ages. But too many students lack access to good public schools, which affects their ability to pursue higher learning. And about 40 percent of students at colleges and universities don’t get a degree within six years — and then often face crippling debt. In order to determine the best ways to support student success from kindergarten onward, more research is needed. We work to identify and scale the most effective practices for all learners, regardless of race or economic circumstances. In K-12, we bring together local school leaders and university researchers to tailor promising innovations in curriculum. And in higher education, we study obstacles to student success and support the development of policies that can help break down barriers.

3.1. K-12

*Give all students access to a solid public education*

All students should have access to a solid public education so they can further their learning and get good jobs. Too many students lack access to good public schools, which creates disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged populations that can persist throughout adulthood. While there are many successful public schools across the country, few cities have been able to guarantee an equal educational opportunity for all children. Breakthroughs in education have already benefited countless children across the nation. The first thing we can do, then, is identify these successful programs and tailor them to struggling communities, so they can reap the same benefits. Previous education reforms have increased the number of public schools governed by nonprofits and created an easy-to-use enrollment system that helps families find great public schools. We believe these strategies hold promise.

**Stakeholder(s):**

K-12 Students

3.2. Higher Education

*Support and promote success for students of all incomes and socioeconomic backgrounds*

Higher education should support and promote success for students of all incomes and socioeconomic backgrounds. Students and taxpayers are investing staggering amounts of money in the higher education system but not always seeing the best return. About 40 percent of students don’t earn a degree within six years and many end up in lower-paying jobs with crippling debt. While some institutions deliver great value, others need support to identify and adopt practices that will improve outcomes for students. And a small minority of schools are actively engaging in profit-driven behaviors that harm students. We are committed to advancing policies that promote value and quality in higher education. We believe that by partnering with institutions of higher learning, we can identify the stumbling blocks that are holding some students back and find solutions that will put them on a path to success — where they graduate on time and without enormous debt. Once we have identified effective practices, we aim to work with state and local governments and other higher education systems to scale those practices to fit their needs.
4. Public Finance

Allocate public funding through a fair and equitable process to programs that strengthen communities

Stakeholder(s)
Communities

We think public funding should be allocated through a fair and equitable process to programs that strengthen communities. City and state governments are being asked to tackle complex social and financial issues in their communities, but there is no one-size-fits-all solution to most problems. Some lawmakers need guidance about how to improve tax policies, others are looking for effective ways to diversify their economy, and many need help revamping public services. When a government needs help addressing a problem, we offer resources to find sustainable, equitable solutions based on research. This includes providing grants that help organizations evaluate the effects of tax and budgeting policies, funding to support turnaround plans for economically distressed communities, and a multimillion-dollar initiative that pairs social scientists and data analysts with state agencies to improve programs and policies.

4.1. Taxes

Guide tax policies by evidence, not special interests, and support the needs and priorities of communities

Tax policies should be guided by evidence, not special interests, and support the needs and priorities of communities. They should be efficient, transparent, sustainable, and fair. Tax collection and spending policies impact local economies, the delivery of public services, and the quality of life of voters. However, the tax system is arcane and difficult to understand. Citizens deserve more information about whether economic development policies are actually effective and whether tax codes are working as intended and promoting fairness and intergenerational equity. We’re funding organizations that study tax policies, evaluate their effects, and seek to identify sound strategies to improve economic mobility and address inequality. Our grantees advise policymakers on how to design tax codes to achieve short- and long-term goals, provide expert testimony to Congress and state legislatures, and have developed state-of-the-art modeling tools to help determine the impact of major reforms like the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

4.2. Retirement

Enable people who work hard during their careers to retire with dignity and financial security

People who work hard during their careers deserve to retire with dignity and financial security. Retirement planning is an urgent but often-ignored policy issue affecting both public- and private-sector workers in the United States. Nearly 90 percent of public employees are enrolled in pension plans, which collectively face a $1.7 trillion deficit. In the private sector, roughly half of all employees do not have access to a retirement plan, driving an even larger $14.5 trillion retirement savings deficit. We fund research on public and private retirement plans to gain insight into how to improve those systems, and we partner with governments to create stronger safety nets while balancing budgeting challenges. We support efforts to improve the retirement security of workers, including the expansion of public programs that automatically enroll employees into IRAs and commitments by policymakers to increase funding for pension plans.
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