#### Issue II 2021



American Heart Association.



# The LISE



**Raymond P. Vara, Jr.** Chairman of the Board Cor Vitae Society

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The American Heart Association is championing health equity for all

Cardiologist uses personal battle with heart failure to inspire patients

Celebrating 40 years of nonpartisan advocacy

Society members make lasting impact in communities

## LEADERSHIP LETTER

From my days as chair of the Honolulu Heart Walk to serving on the local, affiliate and national boards, the American Heart Association has enriched my life beyond measure. Now, I'm humbled to co-lead this great organization in pursuit of our 2024 Impact Goal of advancing cardiovascular health for all, including identifying and removing barriers to health care access and quality.

My passion for the AHA's lifesaving mission is deeply personal: heart disease silenced my parents and only sister. Amid profound loss, I found purpose in helping others live longer, healthier lives. My AHA 'ohana (family) inspires me daily.

As the AHA approaches its centennial anniversary — I'm proud to partner with you on our 10 commitments to:



**Raymond P. Vara, Jr.** Chairman of the Board Cor Vitae Society

- Invest \$100 million in new research programs and grants focused on health inequities and structural racism and expand opportunities for underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in science and medicine.
- Invest at least \$100 million in community-led solutions through the AHA Social Impact Fund, the Bernard J. Tyson Impact Fund and community campaigns, including Voices for Healthy Kids.
- Improve access to and quality of health care for underresourced and rural populations, as part of our 50-state focus on Medicaid expansion.
- Leverage our advocacy, science and news media enterprise against companies targeting disadvantaged communities with unhealthful products.
- Through a \$32 million award to the AHA\*, engage health centers and communities to elevate quality, education and patient engagement to improve blood pressure control, as part of the U.S. Department of

Health and Human Services (HHS) \$121 million National Hypertension Control Initiative.

- Use our clinical registry programs to capture data and create new knowledge on the effects of social determinants of health and health care quality variances.
- Collaborate with our CEO Roundtable to architect a roadmap and develop tools for employers to drive health equity in the workplace.
- Create a digital learning platform for health professionals with courses on addressing structural racism and improving equity in the delivery of health care.
- Elevate the focus of our scientific journals on disparities, anti-racism, health equity, community-engaged/ community-based participatory research and implementation science.
- Increase the diversity of our entire workforce, filling at least one-third of hires with diverse individuals; and mitigate bias in hiring and development processes.

I look forward to sharing our tremendous progress on these commitments. Thank you for being the heartbeat of the AHA as we forge ahead as a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.

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**Raymond P. Vara, Jr.** Chairman of the Board Cor Vitae Society

\*100% federally funded by OMH/OASH/HRSA/HHS

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### AHA NEWS

### Become an ally to fight for health justice

by AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION NEWS

pandemic, protests and politics have highlighted the nation's long-standing, deep-seated racial issues and how they affect the health of millions of Americans.

People who've never confronted racism before are asking, "How can I show I'm an ally?"

First and foremost, "it's about listening, particularly listening to the communities and the people that are directly impacted by injustices," said Judy Lubin, president of the Center for Urban and Racial Equity, a social change consulting group in Washington, D.C.

An ally helps "those without voice gain voice and stand up against the injustices within health care and within society, to try to promote a better society, one in which everybody has a fair shot to be healthy, and a fair shot at a good life."

The term "allyship" is often used in discussions and guides about supporting the need for change. But Lubin said many people addressing racial inequity are focusing more on the idea of "solidarity," which involves "making space and listening to and respecting the leadership of people of color."

Dr. Harlan Krumholz agrees. He's director of the Yale-New Haven Hospital Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation in New Haven, Connecticut.

"It's important that those of us who are outside of those groups that are directly affected are standing up and speaking loudly," he said. "But we need to be sure that the attention stays firmly on those who are suffering."

People have to take on problems that might not affect them directly, Krumholz said, because what happens to people who come from different



backgrounds — race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or more — reflects on us, our health care system and our society.

"I may not be Black, but I've got to talk about the implications of being Black in this society," he said. "There are people who are experiencing the structural racism, who know it, for whom it's deeply personal. And they can see it with clear eyes."

An ally helps "those without voice gain voice and stand up against the injustices within health care and within society, to try to promote a better society, one in which everybody has a fair shot to be healthy, and a fair shot at a good life."

That's an attitude Lubin encourages when people ask how to be allies. Solidarity is doing things that "honor the dignity of everyone," she said.

A white person who understands how systemic racism has kept people of color out of leadership roles might realize they need to step aside to create room for someone, Lubin said. It also involves risks, whether confronting family members or putting a job on the line with a problematic employer.

"At the end of the day, action is what's most important," she said, adding that supporting the humanity and dignity of people who haven't historically had privilege lifts all of society.

**<u>Read the full news story</u>**, and learn more about the AHA's commitment to health equity at <u>Heart.org/10</u>.

## SURVIVOR SPOTLIGHT

# Heart failure at 35 helped New York cardiologist better care for patients

by AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION NEWS

nlike most of his cardiology colleagues, Dr. Satjit "Saj" Bhusri has personal experience with heart disease — and he doesn't hesitate to share his story with patients.

Sometimes, he'll even show them a picture. He's lying in a hospital bed, hooked up to a ventilator and covered in ice to bring down a raging fever — the result of a viral infection that led to heart failure when he was 35.

Bhusri's symptoms started after he returned from a trip to Thailand in 2015. At first, he developed recurrent fevers and shortness of breath. Within days, he could barely get out of bed.

It was a long few weeks. One night, Bhusri's heart stopped temporarily before doctors revived him with CPR.

Growing more worried by the hour, his wife, Ayesha, took him to Lenox Hill Hospital in New York, where he then worked as an associate program director for the cardiology fellowship. One of his fellows performed an echocardiogram that showed Bhusri's heart was barely pumping.

Doctors placed him in a medically induced coma and transferred him to a center specializing in advanced heart failure therapy that was equipped to do a heart transplant.

Bhusri had fulminant myocarditis, a potentially fatal inflammation of the heart muscle that can lead to irregular heartbeats, organ failure and a type of shock that prevents the heart from pumping enough blood to sustain the body. On top of all that, the infection sent him into septic shock, causing his blood pressure to drop dangerously low and his organs to begin to fail.

It was a long few weeks. One night, Bhusri's heart stopped temporarily before doctors revived him with CPR. Along the way, he developed blood clots



Dr. Satjit Bhusri

throughout his body. "My one-year mortality at one point was 90%," he said. "It was a gift and a curse to know too much about that."

Even after he was released from the hospital, Bhusri knew he had only a 50-50 chance of living for another year. To boost those odds, he threw himself into occupational therapy and cardiac rehab, first walking and then jogging. "Cardiac rehab was better than any pill I've ever taken," he said. "I'm as fit as a fiddle, fitter than I was before I got sick."

Determined to stay healthy, he works out with a trainer a few times a week, stopped drinking soda and transitioned to a mostly plant-based, low-salt diet. He also sees a therapist to talk about the anxiety and depression that began after he left the hospital.

He hopes sharing his story with patients will inspire them to invest in their heart health.

#### Read the full news story.

Anything can happen at any age; make sure you're prepared. Plan ahead and receive your free copy of Your Will and Estate Planning Workbook by completing our online form at <u>heart.org/PulseWills</u>.

Including the American Heart Association in your will or estate also provides you the opportunity to become a member of the Paul Dudley White Legacy Society. Questions? Contact us at **PlannedGiving@heart.org** or **888-227-5242**.

### AHA NEWS

### Policy change is key to improving health for all

by AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION NEWS

he American Heart Association is marking four decades of nonpartisan advocacy that supports public policies that improve cardiovascular health.

The AHA's advocacy priorities include improving access to quality; affordable health care; increasing access to healthy foods; creating opportunities for physical activity; improving air quality; strengthening the public health infrastructure and systems of care; and ensuring state and local governments address the health concerns of their residents.

The AHA's 2020 presidential advisory on structural racism, which established a scientific link between institutional racism and poor health, elevated the importance of addressing racism and other social determinants of health through public policy.

"Policy change is essential to achieving our mission, and our advocacy efforts are designed to have maximum impact," said AHA CEO Nancy Brown. "Our advocacy successes have improved people's lives in ways that include increasing access to health care, making more public spaces tobacco-free, reducing food insecurity, promoting physical activity and boosting investments in heart and brain research."

The AHA helped pass or defend more than 100 priority policies at the state and community levels this past year alone. We remain an advocacy force in Washington, D.C., supporting the following federal policies:

- NIH funding increases The NIH budget has increased more than 400% since 1990.
- Affordable Care Act (2010) The landmark legislation includes numerous protections for patients in the insurance market.
- Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (2010) Empowers the U.S. Department of Agriculture to update nutrition standards for all food sold in schools.
- Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) The biggest federal commitment to physical education, it includes the Fitness Integrated into Teaching (FIT) Kids Act, a bill led by the association to improve physical education in schools.



- Furthering Access to Stroke Telemedicine (FAST) Act (2018) – Significantly expands access to telestroke care nationwide.
- Tobacco 21 (2019) Increases the federal sales age for all tobacco products to 21.
- Surprise medical billing (2020) The bipartisan agreement shields patients from bills for medical services and removes patients from payment disputes between providers and insurers.

#### Other major milestones include:

- Expanding advocacy across all levels of government.
- Elevating grassroots voices through You're the Cure, a nationwide network of advocates who ensure the voices of patients and their families are heard in policy debates.
- Researching and translating science.
- Engaging in global advocacy.
- Catalyzing community advocates through the creation of Voices for Healthy Kids in 2013, a critical resource for community groups to be more effective advocates.

Read the full news story.



#### Jaime Zeluck Hindlin | Toluca Lake, California

#### PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE



Jaime Zeluck Hindlin

A longtime entertainment industry insider, Jaime Zeluck Hindlin acts as a mother hen to musicians and songwriters, spearheading tunes from concept to chart-topper.

While excelling in her career, she still had one unfulfilled personal goal: motherhood. But the road wasn't easy. Following a miscarriage, Hindlin and her husband, Jacob, were able to get pregnant again with the help of in vitro fertilization. And things seemed to go along smoothly until the seventh

#### Support that lifts you up

The AHA Support Network is an online community to help patients and caregivers who may feel alone, scared, confused or overwhelmed. Members share experiences, monitor progress and celebrate achievements with others who are facing a similar journey. Visit <u>Heart.org/MaternalSupport</u> to help share the new Maternal Heath forum with expectant moms, new moms and family members looking for support.

month, when she started feeling severe fatigue, extreme foot swelling and dangerously high blood pressure. Increasingly concerned, Hindlin asked repeatedly if something was wrong. Her OB-GYN assured her that she was having a normal pregnancy.

"I had a feeling in my gut that something was wrong," Hindlin said.

She could barely breathe during the delivery, but 17 hours later, she gave birth to her daughter Kate. A few minutes later, the nurse noticed Kate was breathing too fast and rushed her to the neonatal intensive care unit.

"I went into panic mode. We had already been through so much," Hindlin said.

Then, Hindlin began having shortness of breath. Soon, an echocardiogram revealed her heart and lungs were surrounded by fluid. Over the next 30 minutes, the nurse drained between 25 and 40 pounds of fluid from her body. Finally, she could breathe again.

Afterward, doctors confirmed she had an uncommon form of heart failure called peripartum cardiomyopathy, which typically starts in the final month of pregnancy or up to five months after giving birth.

The day before Hindlin's 32nd birthday, she was finally released from the hospital — just two days after her daughter went home.

Barely able to walk — let alone care for Kate the way she wanted to — Hindlin went to cardiac rehab for three months, slowly increasing her strength and stamina. But despite her progress, she struggles with paralyzing anxiety and fear to be alone with Kate, who is now a healthy 4-year-old.

"I'm afraid I'm not strong enough and need someone with me at all times," she said. "My mind is stuck."

Hindlin's experience inspired her support of the AHA. With her generous gift, the AHA's new Support Network Maternal Health forum connects women who have been diagnosed or are experiencing cardiovascular-related pregnancy complications. The network allows survivors and caregivers to share stories and resources and support each other.

"This gift and this cause is the most important thing in the world to me," she said. "To be able to help other women who are going through anything close to what I went through, is the best gift I could give anyone. I did not have the resources for this when I went through my heart failure and if I did, it would have been a game changer for me. I just want to be able to do that for other women and continue to keep spreading awareness."

#### Natalie and Barry Greene | Boston, Massachusetts

#### PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE



Natalie and Barry Greene

Community connection gained new meaning when Barry Greene served as chair of the Boston Heart and Stroke Ball in 2020 and 2021.

"We wanted the Ball to be one component of our efforts, but not the only component," said Greene, who along with his wife, Natalie, began their relationship with the American Heart Association in 2019. "We wanted it to be about community outreach, improving the

health of our community, impacting science and bringing people together."

Thanks to their support, the AHA Empowered Clinics initiative was launched in Boston. This key initiative will provide Federally Qualified Health Centers across Massachusetts with critical education resources, blood pressure cuffs and telemedicine for patients to self-monitor their blood pressure from home.

#### Heart of the Community

The President's Circle celebrates individuals committing annual gifts of \$100,000 or more to support the mission of the American Heart Association. Through the Heart of Community and Heart Ball campaign, President's Circle members have the opportunity to host Issue Salons – small, intimate gatherings that focus on the important health equity issues in the community. The Greenes hosted an Issue Salon to go beyond the ballroom and introduce their network of individuals to the American Heart Association's mission in the community. This salon launched a valuable piece of Barry's Heart Ball leadership – to engage and invite others to join them as distinguished members of the President's Circle.

The Greene's personal connection to heart disease has fueled their dedication to advance the AHA's lifesaving efforts.

Natalie's father suffered from heart disease throughout her childhood. He had his first heart attack when she was in first grade, a second three years later and triple bypass surgery two years after that. All of this came despite an active lifestyle that included swimming, baseball and volleyball.

Eventually, he died of congestive heart failure. If he had access to medical advancements made in the three decades since his death, Natalie believes his life would have been different.

"There's no question he would have lived to see my children be born," she said.

The Greenes also share a love of physical fitness in which they bonded when they met their freshman year at the University of Pittsburgh.

"It's not just about the physical aspect," Natalie said. "It's also about finding a way, especially now, to be mindful."

During these challenging times, the Greenes believe supporting the Boston Heart and Stroke Ball and the work of the AHA is critical to keeping loved ones safe and healthy.

Barry continues to serve in leadership roles with the AHA. He recently joined the Boston Board of Directors and is the co-chair of the 2022 Heart of Boston campaign.

"I want the American Heart Association to be the organization that was there to help the community when the community needed help the most," Barry said.

### **Gyasi Chisley |** Chicago, Illinois **PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE**



Gyasi Chisley

Throughout his illustrious health care career, Gyasi Chisley has served in many volunteer leadership roles with the American Heart Association, including in Cincinnati, Memphis, Miami and New York.

When Chisley and his family moved to Chicago a few years ago, he joined the Metro Chicago Board of Directors and became chair for the 2021 Heart of Chicago campaign.

"The decision to chair the 2021 Heart of Chicago campaign was an easy one for me," said Chisley.

"In addition to the continued focus on cardiovascular disease and stroke, the American Heart Association has realized that the expanded approach to looking at a person's health in its totality is the only way to truly achieve its mission. The Heart of Chicago campaign provided a crucial platform to bring business and community leaders together to address health inequities and make sustainable, lasting change."

With nearly 25 years of experience, Chisley has worked to transform health care, including addressing disparities and lack of access to care that plague the industry. That's why he's passionate about the AHA's focus on health equity. With his ties to South Chicago, he's witnessed firsthand structural barriers to optimal health.

"The discrepancies in our communities are painful, and they should serve not only as a call for action, but a call for unity," Chisley said. "The challenges we face cannot be overcome alone, especially as we continue to fight through a global pandemic, fight for social justice and to empower the economically challenged. We all have an important role to play in creating a healthier, safer and more vibrant community."

#### **Breaking down barriers**

People suffer when they lack access to quality care, nutritious food and other basic health needs. Achieving health equity is core to the American Heart Association's Guiding Values, Mission and 2024 Impact Goal.

As an organization that has relentlessly worked to save and improve lives for nearly 100 years, the AHA has faced urgent health crises before. And now, with the strength of our millions of volunteers, supporters, partners and collaborators, we are urgently doubling down at this unique point in history.

Addressing the drivers of health disparities, including the social determinants of health and structural racism, is the only way to truly achieve equitable health and well-being for all. The AHA is taking bold actions – we call them our 10 Commitments – to remove barriers to health.

Our commitments include:

- Investing in community-led solutions to address health inequities and structural racism.
- Investing in careers of diverse investigators and health inequity research funding.

Learn more about the 10 commitments at <u>Heart.org/10</u>.

#### Debbie and Michael Lundberg | Tampa, Florida

#### CHAMPION'S CIRCLE PAUL DUDLEY WHITE LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS



For Debbie and Michael Lundberg, empowering women to take charge of their heart health is the driving force behind their support of the American Heart Association.

As longtime champions of the Go Red for Women movement in Tampa, the Lundbergs raise awareness and inspire action to fight against women's No. 1 killer — heart disease.

Debbie and Michael Lundberg

Heart disease causes 1 in 3 women's deaths each year —

killing about one every minute. But a significant majority of cardiovascular disease is preventable and treatable if you:

- Don't smoke.
- Manage your blood sugar.
- Get your blood pressure under control.
- Lower your cholesterol.
- Know your family history.
- Stay active.
- Lose or manage your weight.
- Eat healthy.

"With the right information, education and care, heart disease in women can be treated, prevented and even ended," Debbie said.

The Lundbergs take charge of their heart health. Debbie and her friends frequently walk or run Tampa's iconic Bayshore Boulevard to get her AHA-recommended 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity — often before the sun comes up.

"Michael and I are committed to inspiring healthy lifestyles through our support and by example," she said.

Debbie recently completed her third year as chair of the Circle of Red society in Tampa Bay, raising more than \$500,000. She continues to serve on the Executive Cabinet and encourages giving and growth of the Go Red for Women Luncheon in Tampa.

#### **Research Goes Red**

Go Red for Women and Verily's Project Baseline have joined forces to launch Research Goes Red, an initiative calling on women across the U.S. to contribute to health research. The vision for Research Goes Red is to create the world's most engaged and largest women's health registry and platform for research. By joining Research Goes Red, you can:

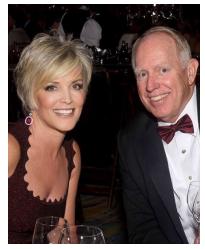
- Contribute via clinical research, surveys and focus groups
- Only participate in the studies that you're interested in
- Help shape the future of disease management and care
- Learn about your own health while helping improve health for all

Visit **projectbaseline.com/studies/** gored/ to learn more.



#### Bob and Suzanne Potter | The Woodlands, Texas

#### HEART & TORCH CIRCLE



Bob and Suzanne Potter have been passionate supporters of the American Heart Association for more than 20 years.

The Potters served as chairs of the 2013 Montgomery County Heart Ball in Greater Houston, were sponsors in 2016 and have been on the executive leadership team for many years.

At the 2017 Heart Ball, Bob and Suzanne were honored for their commitment to the

Suzanne and Bob Potter

AHA and in 2019 were the legacy sponsors of the gala.

"The main reason I continue to support the AHA as my top charitable organization is that I believe the American Heart Association has the broadest and deepest impact in saving lives and improving quality of life of all the charities I support," Bob said.

As the ambassador of Lifetime Giving for Greater Houston, Bob engages people to support the AHA and become members of the Cor Vitae Society's Lifetime Giving Circles.

#### 2024 Impact Goal

Every person deserves the opportunity for a full, healthy life. As champions for health equity, by 2024, the American Heart Association will advance cardiovascular health for all, including identifying and removing barriers to health care access and quality. Specifically, the AHA will:

- Drive advances in research and discovery.
- Raise awareness, empower people, and engage communities to improve their cardiovascular and brain health.
- Advocate relentlessly to ensure access to health care for all and improve health care quality.
- Innovate new solutions to achieve equitable health for all.

Bob supports not restricting gifts because it gives the AHA the flexibility to meet needs as they arise to have the greatest health impact in our communities.

"I decided to take on the challenge of being the Greater Houston ambassador of Lifetime Giving because I have believed for quite some time that the AHA needed to supplement its history of event-driven fundraising at the community level with a more focused initiative targeting fundraising driven by an individual's passion and commitment for the mission of the organization," he said.

Bob will serve as ambassador through 2024 — the year the AHA celebrates its 100th anniversary. The Greater Houston team also plans to honor 24 lifetime members to commemorate the historic milestone. ■



#### In Loving Memory of Cor Vitae Society Member Rick Case

"Rick always loved to tackle and solve big issues. When he heard 10 years ago that heart disease was the country's No. 1 killer, he wanted to help fund research to find a solution. He led the Heart Walk to fundraising records as his way of supporting a cure."

-**Rita**, Rick's Wife Pulse Circle

### MISSION IN ACTION

### Innovative farms grow urban food landscapes

wo urban Texas farms are implementing creative business and distribution solutions as the coronavirus pandemic has strained the food system and spotlighted the urgent need for positive changes.

The farms are recipients of the American Heart Association's second annual Foodscape Innovation Awards.

Twenty-six organizations submitted applications showcasing health-promoting innovations, which were reviewed by a panel of judges with expertise in nutrition, science, retail, manufacturing and public health. The panel chose Moonflower Farms as the recipient of the Excellence Award. The public voted for Restorative Farms as the Consumer Choice awardee among three finalists selected by judges.

Moonflower Farms won for its entry "Sustainable Farming Through Water Conservation."

Federico Marques, CEO and founder, started Moonflower Farms as Houston's first vertical farm in 2016. Since then, it has expanded into a 20,000-squarefoot greenhouse that grows herbs, microgreens, multiple types of lettuce and other produce.

"The greenhouse grows 10 times more produce per square foot and uses 90-95% less water than typical field growing," Marques said.

Besides providing produce at affordable prices to residents in underserved communities, Marques donates 10% of the food grown to food banks.

In 2020, Moonflower donated over 2,000 pounds of its harvest locally.

Restorative Farms, a nonprofit, self-sustaining farm system in an underserved area in South Dallas, won for its entry "Urban Farming Hub Solutions for Healthy Food & Jobs."

The founders' mission is to help neighborhoods by providing jobs, vocational training, seedlings, soil and support to grow fresh vegetables.

Owen Lynch, co-founder and executive director, said he and other partners started Restorative Farms to combat food deserts — areas that lack healthy food — in Dallas.



Master gardener **Tyrone Day** is instrumental in Restorative Farms' mission to educate the community as well as provide jobs, vocational training, seedlings, soil and support to grow fresh vegetables. (Photo courtesy of Restorative Farms)

Since 2017, Restorative Farms has installed professionally run seedling and training farms that promote economic sustainability. Its second farm and training center, established in 2020, is a production and food distribution hub and model farm for small plot intensive, or SPIN, urban farming.

Lynch said the farm's name was inspired by "restorative justice" and the nonprofit's mission to train and employ people who were formerly incarcerated. Tyrone Day, Restorative Farms' master gardener, received a horticultural degree while imprisoned after being wrongfully convicted. Day now manages the farm and shares his vast knowledge with the community.

Growing gardens has numerous other benefits, Lynch said.

In 2020, Restorative Farms distributed 363 of its GroBoxes — raised bed gardens stocked with premium soil and seasonal seedlings — throughout the community, including 160 to alleviate food desert conditions in South Dallas. The organization also helped install 42 raised beds at a homeless shelter. And as COVID-19 dried up farmers market and restaurant revenue for local growers, Restorative Farms helped them pool their produce and launch a direct-to-consumer subscription program.

Read the full news story.

### We all have the power to make a difference

### Visit **heart.org/advocacy** to get involved now

#### **CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF ADVOCACY IMPACT**

American Heart Association.

We all have the power to make a difference by speaking out for policies that help build healthier communities and healthier lives. The American Heart Association supports the enactment of evidence-based public policies at every level of government.

Join a community that is passionate about building a world free of heart disease and stroke—and equitably improving health for everyone, everywhere. Join us today!

**OCACY IMPACT** 



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