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Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announces City's Community Immersion Program wins nationwide policy ideas contest

Innovative police training program developed under Klein recognized as one of six winning policies and top overall idea in public safety category

Columbus, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein today announced the City Attorney's Office won the 2025 NewDEAL Forum [National Ideas Challenge](#), a nationwide competition among forward-thinking state and local policymakers, with submissions focused on policies aimed at building stronger, healthier communities. NewDEAL recognized Columbus's [Law Enforcement Community Immersion Program](#) as the top submission in its Public Safety category.

Community Immersion is a first-of-its-kind program that combines classroom and field experiences for probationary officers (those who just graduated from the academy) to be immersed in the communities they will be patrolling. During the 192-hour Immersion Program, officers meet area leaders, work with service providers, and learn the history and unique challenges facing neighborhoods so that when they encounter an issue in the field, they have a better understanding of how to respond. The program has already led to a documented decrease in both officer complaints and use-of-force incidents. More than 400 officers have completed Immersion training since its creation.

“When I created Community Immersion, I wanted a program that rethinks how we police our streets by giving officers a better understanding of the people, the leaders and unique challenges facing each neighborhood. This program does that. Community Immersion a people-focused, solutions-oriented approach that’s improving community-police relations at a time when it’s truly needed. I’m glad it’s getting deserved recognition and hope it can serve as a model or inspiration for other cities as they look to train their next generation of police officers to go out and protect and serve their communities,” said **Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein**. “Thank you to NewDEAL and the panel for giving Columbus this platform to share our success story on the national stage.”

Winners were chosen by nationally-recognized policy experts who reviewed more than 50 policy proposals submitted by elected officials from cities, counties, and states nationally. Submissions were categorized by six key policy areas: Housing, Health, Education, Youth Investment, Public

Safety, and Democracy. The judges narrowed the field to [twenty finalists](#), and selected one winner from each category. Each of the six Challenge winners are featured in [Governing](#).

“The winners of the 2025 Ideas Challenge exemplify what effective leadership looks like in practice – developing innovative policies that empower hardworking Americans,” said **Jonathon Dworkin, Executive Director of the NewDEAL Forum**. “These elected officials are addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing Americans today, from housing affordability and access to health care to public safety and education. Their work reflects a deep commitment to pragmatic problem-solving that focuses on issues that matter most to families and communities”

In addition to the Columbus Community Immersion Program, winners include:

- **Joanna McClinton, Pennsylvania Speaker of the House**, for her [Voting Rights Protection Act](#), which would improve voter turnout and boost confidence in the electoral system, with results being reported more quickly.
- **Christopher Cabaldon, California Senator**, for his [Expanding College Access Through Direct Admission](#) legislation, which would break down barriers to college entry by establishing direct admission to the California State University system for qualified high school seniors.
- **Cassie Franklin, Mayor of Everett, Washington**, for her city’s [Emergency Mobile Opioid Team](#) (EMOTE), which delivers essential medical services – such as medication-assisted treatment, counseling, and peer support – directly to residents who cannot or choose not to engage with traditional office-based care.
- **Jon Mitchell, Mayor of New Bedford, Massachusetts**, for his [Vacant Property Initiative](#), which will expand the housing supply by making better use of existing housing stock and underutilized space.
- **Kate Farrar, Connecticut Representative**, for her [Early Childhood Education Endowment](#) initiative, a transformational childcare and pre-K program that addresses immediate needs and invests in the future of kids, families, educators, and businesses.

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