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REPORT CALLS FOR FIGHTING POVERTY AND TREATING TRAUMA AS SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE IN ILLINOIS.

We are experiencing a surge of lethal violence in Chicago, and staggering rates of poverty in Chicago and across Illinois. [Cycle of Risk: the Intersection of Poverty, Violence, and Trauma](#), a report released today, argues that addressing Illinois's violence crisis requires investing in reducing poverty and treating trauma. This latest report on Illinois poverty from Heartland Alliance's Social IMPACT Research Center examines how poverty and violence often intersect and feed into one another, how they share root causes, and how the resulting trauma directly feeds back into the cycle.

"The research is unambiguous: violence, poverty, and trauma reinforce each other, and disproportionately impact historically oppressed communities," says Katie Buitrago, Director of Research at Heartland Alliance. "It's clear that an effective anti-violence strategy must include a long-term commitment to eliminating inequity and paving a pathway of opportunity."

The report found that:

- **Poverty continues to pose barriers to a substantial number of Illinoisans.** Over one-third of Illinoisans and nearly half of Chicagoans are considered low-income or living in poverty. The number of poor people living in extreme poverty neighborhoods in Chicago, which are more likely to have conditions that foster violence, has grown by 384% since 2000.
- **People living in poverty experience violence at high rates.** Nationwide, households with very low incomes experience a rate of violent victimization that is 206% higher than people with household incomes of \$75,000 per year or greater.
- **Violence is an issue in all types of communities.** The largest income disparity in victimization rates is in rural areas—the rural poor experience violent crime at a rate 192% higher than high-income people in rural areas.
- **People of color in Illinois are disproportionately impacted by violence and poverty.** Black men aged 15 – 44 comprised over half of homicide victims in Illinois in 2015, while they make up just 3% of the state's population. Across all measures of poverty and well-being, people of color fare far worse in Illinois.
- **The justice system has long been a driver of inequity, stripping communities of people and opportunity.** The criminal justice system disproportionately applies negative consequences to people of color at every step in the process and creates lasting barriers to employment, housing, and opportunity.
- **The human services infrastructure that Illinois needs to prevent violence, address trauma, and end poverty in our communities is being decimated.** Due to a long twenty months without a state budget, the very programs that help address the long-term drivers of violence have been eroding and in some cases disappearing.

Cycle of Risk shows that the long-term consequences of violence can have ripple effects throughout a person's life and the community where they live. Witnessing and/or being a victim of violence can result in trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder. These responses, if unaddressed, can negatively impact people's lives in many ways, from difficulty achieving in school and finding and keeping a job,

to increasing the likelihood of violent and aggressive behavior. In this way, untreated trauma feeds the cycle of poverty and violence in highly impacted communities.

“We have a moral obligation to prevent violence before it starts, intervene where it’s happening, and disrupt the cycles that perpetuate it,” says Evelyn Diaz, President of Heartland Alliance. “We hope this report will shine a light on the interconnectedness of violence, poverty, and trauma so that we can start addressing them all through policy and practice, and make Illinois a safer place—for everyone.”

Cycle of Risk calls for a spectrum of interventions and approaches to interrupt the cycle, including:

- Reforming the criminal justice system and reducing the collateral consequences of criminal records
- Passing a responsible budget that includes adequate revenue for these critical services
- Incorporating a trauma-informed approach to care within public services, schools, criminal justice settings, and health and human services
- Investing in educational achievement and health care
- Increasing job quality and promoting employment opportunities
- Addressing the affordable housing crisis

Cycle of Risk, related infographics, and county-level data are available for download at www.ilpovertyreport.org. All data images are to be credited to The Social IMPACT Research Center. Contact IMPACT for assistance accessing and interpreting local data.

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Heartland Alliance, one of the world’s leading anti-poverty organizations, works in communities in the U.S. and abroad to serve people experiencing homelessness, living in poverty, or seeking safety. Heartland Alliance provides a comprehensive array of services in the areas of safety, health, housing, education, economic opportunity.

Heartland Alliance’s Social IMPACT Research Center conducts research that helps leaders create change and advance real-world solutions to poverty. Follow IMPACT on twitter at twitter.com/impactheartland. For more info, visit www.heartlandalliance.org/research/