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STATE MAKES MEAGER EFFORTS TO COMBAT POVERTY, NEW REPORT SHOWS NEW POVERTY DATA REVEAL OVER 1 OUT OF 7 ILLINOISANS IS POOR, UNDERSCORING STATE'S DISAPPOINTING ANTI-POVERTY TRACK RECORD

CHICAGO, IL, September 18, 2014 – The State of Illinois made very few substantive efforts in the past year to live up to its constitutional charge to eliminate poverty, a new report released today by the Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty says. The state's meager anti-poverty efforts stand in juxtaposition to new data released this week by the U.S. Census Bureau and synthesized in a fact sheet by Heartland Alliance's Social IMPACT Research Center, which show that 1.85 million Illinoisans, 14.7 percent of the state's population, are poor.

"Illinois's poverty rate has grown or remained stagnant for years. In fact, the last time it declined was between 2006 and 2007," said Jennifer Clary, senior research associate at Heartland Alliance's Social IMPACT Research Center. "These new data offer a stark reminder of what history has repeatedly shown us: that though the economy may seem to improve slightly, absent meaningful policy improvements and solutions even the most robust economy cannot wipe out poverty."

New solutions to poverty have not found traction in Springfield, according to the Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty's annual report. While 26 bills were introduced this year that could have had a positive impact on poverty, the State only advanced 7 of them. Furthermore, the State's failure to deal with its revenue problems will lead to a further erosion of programs and services that help improve the lives of the near-record number of people in Illinois who are currently experiencing poverty.

"This Commission's charge is to hold the State accountable for addressing poverty," said Sid Mohn, co-chair of the Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty and president of Heartland Alliance. "As we took stock of the state's actions this year, we realized they amounted to inaction on the poverty front. And today's new poverty figures only underscore the work we have cut out for ourselves if we truly want to be a state with strong and healthy families and communities."

The well-being of Illinois families and communities can be understood in several key trends:

- Illinois poverty remained flat from 2012 to 2013 at 14.7%. The poverty rate is 2.8 percentage points above its pre-recession 2007 level of 11.9%.
- Extreme poverty—having incomes below half the poverty line—rose in Illinois from 6.5% in 2012 to 6.8% in 2013. 855,537 Illinoisans are extremely poor.
- Illinois median household income remained stagnant at \$56,210 in 2013. Income is still 8% below its 2007 level.

The Commission on the Elimination of Poverty calls on the State's decision makers to take bold action to pass policies that will have an impact on poverty, such as, raising the minimum wage, addressing barriers to employment, and increasing access to child care assistance. Even more elemental, the Commission urges lawmakers to identify new sources of revenue or push to restructure Illinois's tax code to adequately fund programs and services that serve individuals and families in our state experiencing extreme poverty. This will help ensure that Illinois makes advances at a pace that our poverty rate demands and that counteracts the losses to education, human services, and other sectors that Illinois has suffered in years past as it has struggled through its budget crisis.

[Read the fact sheet](#) on Illinois and Chicago poverty, income, and health insurance trends based on the newly released data.

[Read the annual report](#) from the Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty.

[Access the local demographic, social, economic, and housing data](#) that were released today for places with populations of 65,000 or more. Contact Heartland Alliance's Social IMPACT Research Center for assistance accessing and interpreting the data.

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Heartland Alliance, the leading anti-poverty organization in the Midwest, believes that all of us deserve the opportunity to improve our lives. Each year, we help ensure this opportunity for more than one million people around the world who are homeless, living in poverty, or seeking safety. Our policy efforts strengthen communities; our comprehensive services empower those we serve to rebuild and transform their lives. For more information, visit: www.heartlandalliance.org or follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/heartlandhelps> or like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/heartlandalliance>.

The Social IMPACT Research Center at Heartland Alliance works with nonprofits, foundations, and governments to measure and grow their social impact. We are experts on issues related to poverty, housing, homelessness, employment, human services, health and nutrition, education, and asset development. To learn more, visit www.socialimpactresearchcenter.org, follow us on Twitter [@IMPACTHeartland](https://twitter.com/IMPACTHeartland) or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/social.impact.research.

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