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NEW POVERTY DATA PAINT GRIM PICTURE IN LIGHT OF STATE BUDGET IMPASSE

1.8 MILLION ILLINOISANS IN POVERTY; MOST AT RISK DUE TO INACTION ON BUDGET

CHICAGO, IL, September 17, 2015 – Today, new data from the U.S. Census Bureau reveal that 1 out of every 7 Illinoisans, 1,805,000 people, live in poverty—unchanged from the prior year. These numbers are particularly alarming because Illinois’s human services infrastructure, which moves and keeps Illinoisans out of poverty, is crumbling with each day that the state budget stalemate continues.

“That poverty remained persistently high and income stagnant despite job growth points to the fact that Illinois clearly faces significant challenges related to not just the number of jobs, but importantly, job quality,” said Amy Terpstra, Director of Research at Heartland Alliance’s Social IMPACT Research Center. “What worries me is that these data reflect 2014 and things have really taken a turn for the worse here in Illinois in 2015 in terms of supports for Illinoisans who are struggling.”

Ending poverty requires a comprehensive network of programs and services that work together to provide opportunity. Almost three months into the new fiscal year, Illinois legislators have yet to pass a complete budget. Without a budget, human services programs—including adult education, early intervention, homeless youth, and many others that reduce poverty—are not receiving state support. Providers throughout the state are reducing staffing, serving fewer people, falling far behind on bills, and some even closing their doors. Even when a budget is finally passed, vital services won’t bounce back automatically; it won’t be as simple as turning the lights back on for these organizations—many of them will no longer exist.

"These numbers tell us that at a time when our national economy is on the mend, poverty continues its firm grip on Illinois," said Evelyn Diaz, president of Heartland Alliance. "Without action on the state budget, the very programs that fight poverty are at risk of being dismantled, undoing the work of decades and robbing generations of Illinoisans of their health, safety and opportunity."

The urgency of the budget impasse becomes more apparent considering these several key indicators that illuminate the hardship millions of Illinoisans face:

- Illinois poverty remained flat from 2013 to 2014 at 14.4%. The poverty rate is still 2.5 percentage points above its pre-recession 2007 level of 11.9%.
- Extreme poverty—having incomes below half the poverty line—remained unchanged in Illinois at 6.6% in 2014. 829,000 Illinoisans are extremely poor.

- Illinois median household income remained stagnant at \$57,444 in 2014. Income is still 7% below its 2007 level.

The Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty will be holding hearings across the state this fall to bring attention to the stories of Illinoisans experiencing poverty, including one open to the public on October 29 at the Glenview Public Library. The experiences of providers and people living in poverty shared at the hearings will be released in conjunction with the Commission's annual report later this fall.

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

[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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