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## NEW CENSUS DATA SHOWS RECOVERY LEAVING THE POOR BEHIND IN ILLINOIS STATE BUDGET CRISIS AND FEDERAL CUTS THREATEN TO MAKE SITUATION WORSE

**CHICAGO, IL, September 19, 2013** – New census data released today show that no progress has been made in the fight against poverty, with 14.7% of Illinoisans (1.85 million people) still struggling to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. Although the rate hasn't changed since last year, it is considerably higher than its pre-recession level of 11.9% in 2007.

*Local data for counties and cities with a population larger than 65,000 are available. Please contact the Social IMPACT Research Center for assistance pulling and analyzing data for your area.*

Job growth numbers are often viewed as a sign of hope, but these data tell a different story. Despite the fact that over 100,000 more Illinoisans were working in 2012, there was no corresponding decrease in poverty. The post-recession growth in low-wage, temporary work is keeping people at the bottom economic rung in our state from moving up.

"This is particularly concerning because more people are working now, yet poverty hasn't budged," commented Samantha Tuttle, Director of Policy and Advocacy at Heartland Alliance. "If Illinois wants to fight poverty, we need to raise the minimum wage. Had it kept pace with inflation, the minimum wage would be over \$10 today."

As Congress puts SNAP, the national food stamp program, on the chopping block this week, the future of Illinois's poor and any prospects for improvement in these numbers hangs in the balance.

"SNAP is one of the most effective ways to fight poverty; if it were counted as income, it would lift 4 million people out of poverty in this country. Cutting SNAP will have devastating personal and community consequences and is simply short-sighted and not a smart long-term plan," said Tuttle. "In Illinois, over 2 million people depend on SNAP benefits to feed their families; any cuts would be devastating for our state."

In Illinois, the ongoing budget crisis stands to put a permanent blockade in the fight against poverty.

"If state lawmakers don't address Illinois's ongoing budget crisis, all state residents, but disproportionately so those who are poor, will be adversely impacted. Providing vital services and balancing the state budget is not an either/or proposition. A responsible solution to the fiscal crisis must include exploring ways to responsibly increase revenue, shared sacrifice in allocating limited resources, and strategic spending decisions," said Tuttle.

The data did show one positive sign: the rate of people under the age of 65 without health insurance has declined, from 15.5% in 2010 to 14.5% in 2012. As Illinoisans lost jobs during the recession, private health

coverage declined from 68.8% in 2008 to 64.7% in 2012; the data released today show that the medical safety net has stepped in to fill the gap, with public coverage increasing from 17.4% in 2008 to 20.8% in 2012. Medicaid is poised to have an even greater impact on alleviating poverty in Illinois starting in two weeks on October 1, when open enrollment under the Affordable Care Act begins. Over 300,000 people in our state will be newly eligible for Medicaid with benefits kicking in on January 1, 2014.

**ACCESS DATA HERE:** <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

**ACCESS SUMMARY HERE:**

[http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/american\\_community\\_survey\\_acs/cb13-167.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/american_community_survey_acs/cb13-167.html)

**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](http://www.heartlandalliance.org) or follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/heartlandhelps> or like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/heartlandalliance>.

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