

FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY
AND FAMILY POLICY
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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JULY 25, 2000
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FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES

TUESDAY, JULY 25, 2000

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY AND
FAMILY POLICY,
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE,
Washington, DC.

The hearing was convened, pursuant to notice, at 2:15 p.m., Hon. Don Nickles (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Also present: Senators Jeffords and Breaux.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DON NICKLES, A U.S. SENATOR FROM OK, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY AND FAMILY POLICY

Senator NICKLES. The Finance Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy will begin.

I want to thank all of our people for being here today. I apologize for being a few minutes late. We had a meeting that just now adjourned.

I also would like to compliment my colleagues for their leadership on fatherhood initiatives. I think these are particularly important as we face reauthorization on welfare reform in the next Congress.

I would particularly like to thank Senators Domenici and Bayh for their work on the Responsible Fatherhood Act, and Senator Kohl on the Child Support Reform Act. I look forward to learning more about both of these bills.

I think there are some positive steps that we in Congress can take to benefit marriage and family. Already we have enacted a \$500 per child tax credit that is now the law of the land, and just recently we passed marriage penalty relief that can provide tax relief for married couples that have incomes of \$52,000, and will get to keep about \$1,350 of their own money. Now, to me that is very significant.

I would hope that the President would sign this bill and it would become the law of the land so we can provide married couples with hard-earned and well-deserved tax relief this year.

The absence of fathers in the home is also a very socially significant problem in our culture today. Many different approaches have been utilized to refocus attention and resources on important issues of family and parental involvement.

In my own State of Oklahoma, which has one of the highest divorce rates in the country, Governor Keating has launched the Marriage Initiative. He is using \$10 million of TANF money and

this program creates a public message campaign, and it also develops pilot programs to provide support services for couples such as counseling and mediation, and enhances high school health education programs to include relationship and marriage education.

In addition, Oklahoma is creating a Fatherhood Initiative as part of the Marriage Initiative which will work with community and faith-based organizations to promote involvement of fathers.

So I wish, again, to thank my colleagues for their leadership, and I look forward to hearing what they have to say.

I am particularly pleased that my colleague, Senator Breaux, is with us today. I will recognize Senator Breaux.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN BREAUX, A U.S.
SENATOR FROM LOUISIANA**

Senator BREAUX. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for convening this hearing. Thank our colleagues for the legislation that they have sponsored.

Fatherhood is about more than just having a child. Fatherhood is really about responsibility, raising a family, and participating as a symbol to that child. Unfortunately, more and more we have situations where there are less and less fathers around to help raise a child in a responsible manner.

My own State of Louisiana has a situation which is almost completely intolerable, in the sense that 33 percent of families in Louisiana do not have fathers in the home, and over 40 percent of babies that are born in Louisiana are born out of wedlock. Both of those statistics put us in the second worst category in the Nation in terms of those statistics.

I am not sure how we legislate to prevent that from happening and continuing to happen. All three of our colleagues have offered, I think, really intelligent and solid suggestions about what we need to do as a society and what we can help to do as a Congress to try and change those statistics and bring responsibility back to fatherhood.

So, I am anxious to hear from our colleagues, and join with them in sponsoring both of the bills, as a matter of fact, that are now pending before this committee. I thank them, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator NICKLES. Senator Breaux, thank you very much.

First, I will call on Senator Domenici and Senator Bayh to discuss the Responsible Fatherhood Act, and then I will call upon Senator Kohl regarding his Child Support Reform Act.

So, Senator Domenici?

**STATEMENT OF HON. PETE DOMENICI, A U.S. SENATOR FROM
NEW MEXICO**

Senator DOMENICI. Mr. Chairman, Senator Breaux, thank you very much for inviting Senator Bayh and I as co-sponsors of this bill to come and spend a few minutes with you.

I want to say that I was asked and encouraged to join this bill by my good friend Senator Bayh, who had worked in this area while he was a Governor, and we shared for a few minutes in my office what this was all about. I will yield to him very soon, because

essentially the job of writing this bill and getting it ready, he undertook.

But I would like to say that many of us, clearly including the Chairman, speak of things that the Federal Government does or does not do that gets in the way of some relationship out there that we think is very vital to our country.

You just went on record, as you have eloquently before, that we surely ought not punish married people. Or to put it the other way, we should not encourage people not to get married because if they do they incur a significant tax burden. That is terrible American policy, unless you do not care about families. If you do not care about families as our future and part of our marvelous past, then you would not care.

Well, to assent, to a degree, we cannot live as a society and continue to flourish, in my opinion, with the statistics on the lack of fatherhood continuing and to grow enormously. They have already grown in the State of New Mexico. Twenty-four percent of families do not have fathers present in the home. In my State, out-of-wedlock babies are up to 40 percent.

Now, clearly, it will take more than one generation for this attitude, or character, or quality of life to move in a better direction. But surely, anything and everything we can do with reference to the welfare law that will sensitize that law to fatherhood ought to be done, and something is being done.

In our bill, we recommend two or three additional things that when you are working on a welfare bill that you do to make it easier for a father to be a father rather than more difficult.

Second, we recognize that out in America, people are competing for ideas, ideals, and what should we be like, who should we follow, what is the quality or character we want to have to our life? There is great competition by a community of interest that says it does not matter, or at least they implicitly depict that day by day in the media, in the television, in programs, and shows.

We have just a small amount of money that we ask ultimately be appropriated after authorization that would say to the States, if you can come up with a program that challenges the communities and people therein to be concerned about fatherhood, with television advertisements and other activities of that sort, we want to help you by matching some of the money that you would solicit or get for that.

I think anything we can do in that area is a very, very exciting effort to at least begin to match the rhetoric that it does not matter, or even a growing sentiment out there that it is kind of nice to not be responsible for your child, it is kind of cute to have children on a man's side and then just leave. We want to try in some way to put some road blocks in front of that, in the face of that.

With that, thank you for listening to me. I would be delighted if the sponsor of this bill that I join with would continue from that point.

Senator NICKLES. Senator Domenici, thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Senator Domenici appears in the appendix.]

Senator NICKLES. Senator Bayh?

STATEMENT OF HON. EVAN BAYH, A U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA

Senator BAYH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would just like to note that, as always, our colleague from New Mexico is much too humble. I want to thank him for his leadership. He served and was a friend with my father, and now I have the privilege of serving with him, being a friend of Senator Domenici.

Senator Domenici speaks with a wealth of experience in this area, Mr. Chairman. Pete, how many children do you have?

Senator DOMENICI. I have eight.

Senator BAYH. How many grandchildren?

Senator DOMENICI. I have 10.

Senator BAYH. Ten. So he speaks with the experience of a practitioner, Mr. Chairman. [Laughter.] I was delighted when I went to talk to Senator Domenici that he immediately saw the importance of strengthening families to the future of America's children.

Senator Domenici, I would just like to say it is an honor and privilege to join with you in this very important effort.

Likewise, to our colleague Senator Kohl, I admire his efforts in the important area of trying to encourage a TANF pass-through, to provide more financial support for our children across the country, and Herb, I look forward to working with you and appreciate your leadership in this very important undertaking as well.

Mr. Chairman and Senator Breaux, I would like to thank you for allowing us to have this very first hearing on this important subject in the U.S. Senate. I am very grateful to you.

I hope this will serve as a call to action, action to pass our legislation because it will help America's children by strengthening their families, action that will help women across America by encouraging more men to fulfill their obligations as parents, action to help America's taxpayers, because it is not right when some individuals bring children into the world and then abandon their mothers to raise them and expect the taxpayers to pick up a significant part of the burden.

Action, also, to recognize the important role of faith-based and community organizations in tackling the challenges that face us as a country, and action to do so in a fiscally responsible, non-bureaucratic way.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that all these principles and objectives would be achieved through passing our legislation.

I want to thank the other committee members who are co-sponsors of our bill who could not be with us today, Senators Jeffords, Moynihan, Graham, Robb, Kerrey, and as Senator Breaux previously mentioned, he is also a co-sponsor of our legislation.

I believe that two of our colleagues deserve special mention here today. Senator Moynihan, of course, has been laboring in these vineyards now for the better part of three and a half decades.

He understands very clearly the nexus between strengthening families and solving some of the other social challenges that our country now faces. I would like to thank him for his co-sponsorship and his longstanding leadership and expertise in this area.

On a sadder note, I would also like to note that our dear and former colleague, Senator Coverdell, was a co-sponsor of this bill. I went to see Senator Coverdell. As a matter of fact, the last really

in-depth conversation I had with Paul was on this subject and he very quickly also recognized the importance of moving forward to encourage more fathers to do right by their children and their families. I am proud to note that he also was a co-sponsor of this legislation.

I think their presence, as well as that of others of our colleagues, points out, Mr. Chairman, that this is one of the rare opportunities that we have in this body to form a bipartisan consensus. The President of the United States mentioned this subject in his State of the Union Address.

The Vice President came out with a very aggressive and far-reaching program on Father's Day addressing this subject, and the Governor of Texas, in the last two weeks, has also come out with his proposals on this area, all indicating that Democrats and Republicans alike, at the State and Federal levels alike, recognize the significance of dealing with the problem of father absence.

Mr. Chairman, let me say that there is an unfortunate irony at the heart of the prosperity that America is currently enjoying. At a time when we have created more jobs than ever before in the history of our country, started more new businesses, added more wealth, there is a growing recognition that there is a fraying of the social fabric. People yearn that our country be not only a Nation of wealth, but a more decent, more just, and more compassionate country as well.

Many are concerned, quite rightly, about the alarmingly persistent high level of teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse among our youth, violence on the part of young people, and educational and employment under-performance on the part of too many of America's young citizens.

More and more of the scholarly work indicates that these are, in fact, symptoms of a much deeper problem, a problem that we must address if America is going to be all that it can and must be in the 21st century.

More and more of the analysis ties these symptoms to the problem of family breakdown. That family breakdown itself can be traced to the problem of father absence and too many men being unwilling to fulfill their very profound and important responsibilities.

This has tragic consequences not only for the children, but for the mothers of the children and, as I mentioned before, for the taxpayers as well.

Mr. Chairman, the statistics are clear and they are overwhelming. When children live absent their fathers they are five times more likely to live in poverty, twice as likely to commit crimes, more likely to bring weapons and drugs into the classroom, twice as likely to drop out of school, twice as likely to be abused, more likely to commit suicide, and over twice as likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, and more likely to become pregnant as teenagers.

The costs to the taxpayers are equally dire. The Federal Government, Mr. Chairman, spends \$8 billion a year on drop-out prevention alone. Last year alone, we spent more than \$105 billion on poverty relief programs for families and children.

The cost to society of drug and alcohol abuse is more than \$110 billion per year. The social and economic consequences of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases have been estimated at over \$21 billion per year.

Mr. Chairman, for the sums that we request in this legislation dealing with the root causes of these problems would not only be good for our children and our families, they would be good investments for the taxpayers as well.

Now, what to do about all of this, Mr. Chairman. Our legislation includes several important approaches, the first one of which is preventative. It is so much better if we can address the root causes of irresponsible behavior on the part of too many men before they bring children into the world.

As Senator Domenici mentioned, there is almost a sense on the part of some today that it is somehow or other an indication of virility or manhood to bring a child into the world and then just walk away, not caring about the welfare and well being of that child.

There are many influences in society that are unfortunate. We do not endorse or support censorship. On the contrary, we think it is important to get out a good, positive message, reaching more young men about the importance of waiting to become fathers until they are emotionally and financially prepared to take that very important and profound step.

Part of our bill deals with community outreach through advertising in the 50 States. I would like to take just one minute of my time and ask my assistant to run two of the commercials that have proven to be effective in communicating this message.

[Whereupon, a videotape presentation was shown.]

Senator BAYH. Mr. Chairman, I think you can see the important and profound emotional impact that relaying the consequences of fatherlessness to young men can have in encouraging them to do right by themselves and right by their children.

The second part of our bill, Mr. Chairman, deals with reaching out to men who have already become fathers. During my years as Governor in our State, we instituted a grant program very similar to that included in our legislation, which now has reached out to 5,000 young men across our State, reconnecting them to their children and the mothers of their children, enabling them to try and be good fathers and good role models to those young people.

Very often, we deal with those young men who have been referred to as dead-broke fathers, young men who would like to do right by their families but have not got the educational or employment background to do so.

We try and give that to them through education and training efforts, job placement, and putting them back on their feet so they can reconnect to their families and be the kind of fathers that they want to be and that their children need.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, it is important that we deal with dead-beat fathers and parents as well, ensuring that men, at a minimum, fulfill their financial obligations to their children and to the mothers of their children.

Let me say two quick things in conclusion, Mr. Chairman. First, our effort is focused upon what is good for America's kids, but we also want to help their mothers. Single mothers have been heroic

and too often have been forced—forced—to raise children alone without the assistance of the fathers that the children and the mothers are entitled to.

I want to point out that domestic violence prevention is a vitally important component of our bill and others that are going to be successful in reconnecting men to their children and their mothers.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, much has been made about welfare reform in our country. I was a major proponent of that as Governor of our State; I know you have supported that as well. I am proud of our successes in this area.

Most of that is focused on the role of women who, in most cases, are the custodial parent. We reached out to them and said, look, it is important, if you are going to receive public benefits, that you be responsible for yourselves, that you get an education and be willing to accept job placement when job vacancies become open. That is good and that is right.

But we have not focused on the men yet. What about the men who bring children into the world and then just walk away, leaving the women to deal with the consequences of that, and the taxpayers to deal with the costs of that as well?

What about those men? Is it not time to say to them that if you bring a child into the world you have to be responsible by getting an education, getting a job, paying your support, and if at all possible, being there emotionally for your child as well? I think so, and that is what our legislation embodies.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I am going to provide every member of the committee with a copy of the Morehouse Conference. It contains a compelling and eloquent statement about this issue, and I would just like to quote this, in conclusion.

It refers to African-American leaders, but I think it applies to us all. "We call upon all African-American leaders to bring to this movement the same energy and dedication, the same passion and fearlessness, and the same creativity and courage that was summoned to wage the struggle for basic civil rights.

We call upon our National, State, and municipal leaders to put the full weight of our government resources at all levels for at least the next decade behind partnerships designed to reunite fathers with their children and to strengthen our families.

Mr. Chairman, that is what our legislation is all about. I hope that the members of this committee will join with Senator Domenici and myself, Senator Kohl, and others in doing everything we can to make sure that another generation of America's children need not be raised without fathers. Thank you.

Senator NICKLES. Senators Bayh and Domenici, thank you very much. I know you want to leave, but just a couple of quick questions, then I will call on Senator Kohl.

I remember, and Senator Domenici, you might have been there, but our former colleague, Senator Nunn, led a prayer breakfast one time and talked about the number of babies that were born out of wedlock and actually mentioned, in some cities the percentages were frightening, at 80 or 90 percent in some cities.

I do not remember exactly what the percentage was, but in St. Louis, and I think in some city in New Jersey. I can't remember, Jersey City, or where, but it was like 85 or 90 percent. Then with

the attendant statistics, more likely to be involved in drugs, more likely to be in jail, and so on, it is a frightening statistic.

Do you happen to have the statistics on the percentage of kids that are born out of wedlock off the top of your head?

Senator BAYH. I don't have it off the top of my head, Mr. Chairman. That should be readily obtainable, however. It is an unfortunate predictor.

Senator NICKLES. My staff says, St. Louis, 96.6 percent. Wow. Baltimore, 96. District of Columbia, 96. It goes on. New Orleans is 95. Wow. These are teenage ratios.

Senator BAYH. It is alarmingly high, Mr. Chairman. That is not only high among teenagers, but it is growing among older populations as well. It is now not only concentrated among minority populations, but is spreading to the rest of the population and has been an unfortunate and accurate predictor of later challenges facing those children, as well as their mothers. It is a cycle that tends to perpetuate itself.

Senator NICKLES. Well, if I remember Senator Nunn's comment, in some areas nationally it was 66 percent amongst predominantly minority teenagers. That is a frightening statistic, and it is growing amongst other categories, caucasian and others. It is growing rapidly, and those are frightening statistics.

Whatever we can do, and I think your legislation indirectly works on that and I compliment you for it. I think you are exactly right. These kids that are born and raised without the benefit of two parents, some of them are going to make it. Some of them are going to be enormously successful, and we want to pat them on the back. But they are starting at a disadvantage, and a significant disadvantage. So, I compliment you for it.

Senator DOMENICI. Mr. Chairman?

Senator NICKLES. Yes.

Senator DOMENICI. Might I just say, I was there and I recall what a startling message that was, because nobody quite thought that that was going to be the subject matter of our weekly prayer breakfast. But it was such a dynamic and powerful message, that it left all of us in awe.

I honestly believe that this bill is just a little piece of what I would hope would be a growing interest on the part of more and more people, more and more organizations, all kinds of groups that are concerned about America, that as legislation like this promotes a counter-force by way of ads such as this, that other leaders in America from top to bottom will begin to talk about this issue as one that is real rather than just letting it go by. It demands that we speak out, not that we say it is just happening, so what.

Frankly, if that is the attitude of leadership, that is the attitude of what we are promoting for the eyes, minds, and ears of young children, it will just get worse. Because in our country, for now, it is not going to be easier for teenagers to avoid the temptations of sex, it is going to be easier, because that is how we are making it. Frankly, whether we like it or not, it is pretty natural that sex causes pregnancy. It is pretty obvious.

Do not talk about my life, now. I want to close by talking about humility and tell you one funny little story. I have twins who are my last babies, and they were 6 years old, and on a morning when

the teacher's convention was in effect so they did not have to go to school, I put on a robe and said, I will stay with them for about an hour.

They were watching comic strips and I wanted them to listen to me. So I got behind them and kept saying their name, first very lightly, Paula, Helen, Paula. Pretty soon, very loud. One of them just took her head and looked back and me and said, "Daddy, you is no king, you is just a Senator." [Laughter.] With that, I am going to be leaving.

Senator NICKLES. Senator Breaux?

Senator BREAUX. I am a co-sponsor of the legislation, the Bayh-Domenici legislation. But I was looking through the legislation and it seems that the thrust of it, Evan, is to give grants to States for a media campaign.

I was kind of looking for a 2 x 4 and a hammer, and I do not see that in the bill that we have authored. I am wondering, is that because there are other rules or laws that provide that? I mean, those commercials are wonderful.

I am just not sure how many of the people we are trying to get to are going to be watching it and getting that much out of it if they do not know that there are some very severe penalties involved if they do not do what they should do.

I mean, I am looking for the 2 x 4 and the hammer to some of these kids as opposed to just a media campaign that makes me feel great, but I am not sure it is going to hit the target that we are trying to hit. And maybe it is not in this legislation because there are enough rules out there that do provide the hammer. I am looking for the carrot and the stick type of approach to teach them some responsibility other than just spending more money on a media campaign.

Can you address that concern?

Senator BAYH. Yes, I can, John. Thank you for raising it. I think we need a comprehensive approach and I am in favor of what works, carrots, sticks, anything else, because the consequences of this to our children, to the taxpayers, to their mothers, are profound and, as the Chairman noted, are very pronounced in some communities across our country.

We start with prevention as being the best option. If we can prevent unwanted fatherhood to begin with, that is the best approach, encouraging more young men to take responsibility for their actions.

There is some evidence, Senator, in the area of teen pregnancy prevention that aggressive public outreach efforts can reduce, or at least help to reduce, some of the incidence of teen pregnancy.

We hope to accomplish that by alerting more men, particularly young men, about the consequences of their action, at least getting them to stop and think a bit, and hopefully wait until they are prepared, preferably, as the Chairman was noting, within the bonds of marriage.

If not possible, then still being responsible for their actions and emotionally and financially fulfilling their obligations to their children. So, that is a part of our approach, Senator.

The second approach is the grant program I mentioned, much like we started in Indiana. I think there have been some activities

in Oklahoma, some other States along these lines, where we have actually reached out to young men after they have become fathers and have recognized, now that they are a little older and more mature, wait a minute, if I had to do it over again, maybe I would do it a little bit differently. How do I go about reconnecting to my kids? How do I go about getting on my feet and be a better role model to those children, and so forth? So, that is a part of it as well.

We do have the TANF pass-through which I think is good for supporting the families. Also, and I know Herb is going to get into this so I do not want to steal his testimony on this issue, but I think that is a good thing.

There have been some other proposals floated which, frankly, are not included in our legislation, Senator, that I would have an open mind to. For example, the Vice President, in his package, floated the idea about encouraging credit card companies to not extend credit to individuals who had not paid their child support.

Senator BREAUX. Take their driver's license away.

Senator BAYH. Yes. Things of that nature. So there are some suggestions out there, more on the lines of the hammer, as you mentioned, that I think are worth considering. Again, I think this is a significant enough challenge for our country, I am in favor of whatever works. If it takes a hammer, then let us use one.

Senator DOMENICI. Mr. Chairman?

Senator NICKLES. Senator Domenici?

Senator DOMENICI. Let me just say, if anybody brought me a proposition that could be called a hammer and nails that I thought had the least bit of chance of success, I would ask that our bill be amended and that we put it in there.

But I think, ultimately, this is the kind of problem that, instead of using an analogy of a hammer and nails, you are going to have to use an analogy of dedicated men and women, committed in numbers. Maybe you can draw an analogy, men side by side, hundreds of them, men and women, saying we are not going to put up with the kind of society our children are living in. That is what is happening.

I mean, I read a story the other day by five teenagers, a very in-depth interview, that were laughing at their mothers and fathers. They were 14 years of age, and the whole joke and fun of the story was, they do not even think we kiss yet, but they actually are having intercourse as frequently as married couples, or more so, at the respective homes of the five parents that they are saying, they do not even know that we are kissing each other.

Well, you cannot do that with a hammer and nails. Somehow, these parents have to decide they either like this kind of society for their kids, and some of them implicitly seem to, or they do not like it. Then they have to decide they want to do something about it.

Frankly, I think that if we could encourage that, it will take the place of many hammers and nails and will probably begin to solve this kind of problem. I do not know how to do it, but I certainly would say this bill cannot harm that golden objective and it might have a bit of a positive impact.

Senator BAYH. Senator BreauX, if I could just make one other comment. In essence, you are asking me, is it possible to legislate

responsible behavior? This is a question I have struggled with, and I think we should encourage it through public outreach efforts.

I think we need to try and correct irresponsible behavior, which our grant program does. And if there are more, for lack of a better word, coercive steps that can be taken for people who are not doing right by their children and their families, then we should be willing to consider that as well.

I think it is a continuum of action that we need to undertake to address this problem. Ultimately, as Senator Domenici was pointing out, we need to try and affect people's attitudes and their beliefs about what is important to themselves and to the rest of society. There is no silver bullet here. I think we need to do a variety of things.

Senator NICKLES. Well said. Senator Domenici and Senator Bayh, thank you both very much.

Senator BAYH. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I know the demands on your time have been great. Once again, I want to express my gratitude to you for holding this hearing. I truly appreciate it.

Senator NICKLES. Happy to do it.

Next, I will call on our colleague, Senator Kohl, and compliment him for his work on the Child Support Reform Act and ask him to make his presentation.

Senator Kohl?

STATEMENT OF HON. HERB KOHL, A U.S. SENATOR FROM WISCONSIN

Senator KOHL. Well, I thank you, Chairman Nickles and Senator Breaux, for giving me this opportunity to join in this discussion on Fatherhood Initiatives.

My focus today concerns efforts to increase child support collections by increasing the support dollars that are delivered directly or passed through to families.

To me, there is no stronger indication that we are facing a fatherhood crisis than the overwhelming evidence that we are facing a child support crisis.

The public system collects child support payments for only 23 percent of its caseload and our Nation's children are now owed roughly \$47 billion in overdue child support. So, clearly, many fathers are not paying what they should and too many children still lack the support they need and deserve.

While the level of overdue child support is not acceptable, poor collection rates do not tell a simple story. There are many reasons why non-custodial parents do not pay support. Some are not able to pay because they do not have jobs or have fallen on hard times. Others may not pay because they are unfairly prevented from spending time with their children.

But yet other fathers do not pay because the public system actually discourages them from paying. As you no doubt know, under the current system a significant amount of child support is kept by the government as repayment for public assistance rather than delivered to the children for whom it is intended.

Since the money does not benefit their children, many fathers are either discouraged from paying support at all or at least discouraged from paying through the formal system.

Our Child Support Reform Act, which boasts, among others, Senator Breaux as a co-sponsor, attempts to address this problem. This bipartisan legislation creates new incentives for States to allow families working their way off, or who are just off, public assistance to keep their own child support payments.

Under our bill, if a State gives the child support it helps collect to the family, then that State can credit the payment as spending on welfare. If States give most of the support to the family without reducing the family's public assistance, then that State will no longer have to repay the Federal Government its share of the support payment.

So we provide States with more options, and not mandates, to do the right thing and make child support payments truly meaningful for families.

In 1997, we worked successfully for a waiver to allow my State of Wisconsin to adopt this policy and they have had great success. Wisconsin has found that when child support payments are delivered to families directly, then fathers are more apt to pay, and to pay more.

In addition, Wisconsin has found that, overall, this policy does not increase government costs. This is because passing through support payments to families means that these families have more of their own resources and that they are, therefore, less apt to depend on public help.

We know that creating the right incentives for fathers to pay support and increasing collections has long-term benefits. People who can count on child support are more likely to stay in jobs and stay off public assistance.

Passing through child support directly to families would simplify the job for States as well. The current distribution system is an administrative nightmare for all the States. Right now, the States divvy up child support dollars into as many as nine different pots. Under our proposal, States would have greater freedom to adopt a straightforward policy of collecting child support and delivering it to families without burdensome regulations.

Mr. Chairman and Senator Breaux, Senator Jeffords, moving towards a simpler child support system, one that puts greater emphasis on getting funds directly to families, is the right and the most fair approach.

Within the broad context of fatherhood initiatives, I urge you not to overlook the importance of child support reform and of allowing fathers to support their children directly.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

[The prepared statement of Senator Kohl appears in the appendix.]

Senator NICKLES. Senator Kohl, thank you very much. You are bringing back some interesting memories when you mention the Wisconsin waiver, because we wrestled with that when we passed the Welfare Reform bill.

I remember meeting with your Governor on more than one occasion, and also I remember having some challenges with the current administration because they were not in favor of the waiver. This thing went back and forth numerous times in, I think, 1995, 1996.

So that was a hard-fought waiver, and you are bringing it back. I had kind of forgotten about that.

Senator KOHL. As you know, Wisconsin, Mr. Chairman, has been in the vanguard of welfare reform initiatives and success. This one that I have talked about this afternoon has been particularly successful and I think is something for us to consider nationally.

Senator NICKLES. Well, I compliment you and your State, Governor Thompson and others, for your leadership. You have had a reduction in welfare, if I remember, in the what, 60 percent range?

Senator KOHL. Right.

Senator NICKLES. So, my compliments to you. I am analyzing your legislation. I have not quite figured out how the pass-through works and the credits, and so on, but I very much appreciate your bringing it to our attention, and your work on the legislation.

Is the legislation supported by your Governor?

Senator KOHL. Yes, it is.

Senator NICKLES. Did we have anything from the National Governors' Association?

Senator KOHL. I am not sure.

Senator NICKLES. All right. I appreciate that.

Senator KOHL. We will work with you on it.

Senator NICKLES. I appreciate that, and I look forward to working with you. I have no further questions.

Senator Breaux, Senator Jeffords?

Senator JEFFORDS. No. Thanks. Excellent statement.

Senator KOHL. Thank you.

Senator NICKLES. Thank you, Senator Kohl.

Next, we will ask our panelists to come up. For the information of our panelists, I have asked Senator Jeffords if he would not mind chairing this. I will be here for just a little bit, but if Senator Jeffords is willing to do so.

First, we have Evelyn Lynn, who is a Florida State Representative; Charles Ballard, founder and CEO for the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood; Dr. Jeffery Johnson, president, National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership; and David L. Levy, president of the Children's Rights Council.

If all of our panelists would come up, that would be appreciated. Then we will just go through the line.

I am going to be able to stay for a couple of our panelists and excuse myself, because I have a 3:00 that I cannot get out of. Senator Jeffords will chair the hearing, and I appreciate Senator Breaux's attendance as well.

Representative Lynn?

**STATEMENT OF HON. EVELYN LYNN, FLORIDA STATE
REPRESENTATIVE, ORMAND BEACH, FL**

Representative LYNN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee.

I am Florida State Representative Evelyn Lynn. I appear before you today on behalf of the National Conference of State Legislatures. I serve on NCSL's executive committee and on NCSL's Advisory Committee on Responsible Fatherhood.

Mr. Chairman, legislators have an interest in policies that support intact families, encourage marriage, and provide opportunities for two-parent participation.

State legislators recognize that, while efforts to salvage some relationships may not be appropriate, they support efforts to assist parents with parenting skills, even in the absence of marriage, in order to have a stable support system for the children involved.

I will focus my remarks on Florida's efforts and make recommendations for Federal action that would supplement State efforts.

State legislators are involved in this issue because we know that children who grow up with two involved parents are less likely to be poor, less likely to have contact with the criminal justice system, less likely to become teen parents, and more likely to graduate from high school.

In 1996, I shepherded a bill establishing Florida's Commission on Responsible Fatherhood, a comprehensive, State-wide strategy. We fund Florida's Commission on Responsible Fatherhood each year with \$1 million from TANF and \$500,000 from State funds.

The commission's purpose is to raise awareness of the importance of fathers, identify obstacles that prevent the involvement of responsible fathers in the lives of their children, and fund successful strategies.

Since 1996, we have funded 27 programs covering 30 counties, including 5 intensive service delivery programs serving fathers at day care centers, hospitals, and prisons, and five job placement and parent education programs to assist low-income, non-custodial fathers obtain employment, pay child support, and become better dads.

But Florida is not alone in this effort. States throughout the Nation are building services to help fathers through employment assistance, peer support, and family-centered services for both low-income and incarcerated dads. Eleven States directly appropriate funds for fatherhood.

Mr. Chairman, the NCSL Advisory Committee on Responsible Fatherhood has just completed Connecting Low-Income Fathers and Families. It is a guide to practical policies. The committee staff has distributed copies to you. The guide highlights State programs and policies that support low-income dads.

The Federal Government has a critical part to play in fatherhood. It can provide technical assistance on child support issues, it can continue to give States flexibility in the TANF program, encouraging States to use TANF funds for fatherhood programs. Such expenditures support one of the four goals of the 1996 welfare law to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Mr. Chairman, I urge you to support funding for a national fatherhood initiative that would fortify efforts in our States to address the needs of low-income, non-custodial parents. It should provide funds to all States and ensure State legislative authority. It should provide States flexibility to determine program eligibility and allow government, private, and faith-based providers.

As for child support enforcement, some fathers are unable, not unwilling, to pay. These fathers often have not completed high

school, have a sporadic work history, and may have arrest records. They were raised without fathers of their own and they do not have role models for parenting. They are dead broke, not deadbeat.

NCSL believes that efforts to help low-income fathers be better parents and providers will result in increased financial support and stronger connections with their children.

Child support enforcement is essential to the long-term success of welfare reform because the combination of earnings and child support help low-income families become self-sufficient.

Currently, Federal law requires that if a State passes through child support, it must pay not only the State's share of collected child support, but must reimburse the Federal Government for its share. NCSL strongly supports a change in Federal law that eliminates this requirement.

Mr. Chairman and members, we would support a new Federal option for States to change distribution rules to pass through child support to parents currently receiving TANF and arrearages to parents who have left TANF and are working.

We would oppose efforts to mandate such changes, however, because it would negatively impact all States financially, especially the 16 States that finance their child support system with child support collections.

NCSL asks that the Federal Government provide technical assistance to States concerning the current policy toward compromising of arrearages. Arrearages are often barriers to participation in fatherhood programs and to family reunification and marriage.

On behalf of the National Conference of State Legislatures, thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Senator NICKLES. Representative Lynn, thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Representative Lynn appears in the appendix.]

Senator NICKLES. As I stated, I am going to have to run. I am going to ask all the panelists to make their comments, but I have to ask you one little question.

Representative LYNN. Yes, sir.

Senator NICKLES. Because of the changes in welfare reform, the States have big surpluses and unused TANF money, I think, to the tune of \$8 billion. If that is the case, why are the States asking us to assume significant responsibility in these additional costs?

Representative LYNN. For my own State, you know we have already jumped in to this initiative. But I will tell you that Florida is very cautious about making sure it follows your guidelines. When it comes to expending dollars, there has been a lot of confusion as to how these dollars can be spent.

I, myself, have asked the NCSL consultants to come in and meet with our staff and our legislators to make sure that we are expending dollars in every innovative way possible to deal with situations such as these, and many others that we could use the money on. We are learning better now in our State how to use that money.

However, States throughout our Nation need your assistance and need your advice on exactly how to interpret the guidelines correctly.

Senator NICKLES. I appreciate that. With the unused surpluses, anyway, you understand my question.

Representative LYNN. But there will not be those surpluses then.

Senator NICKLES. I am going to turn the meeting over to my colleague, Senator Jeffords. I very much appreciate your willingness to chair the remainder of the hearing.

To our other panelists, I appreciate your presentations before the committee. I am going to read your presentations, and look forward to your input. I appreciate your assistance to us in this area, and your expertise. Thank you very much.

Senator Jeffords?

Senator JEFFORDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am very pleased to be able to help out. I look forward to listening to the other witnesses, and to ask questions.

As you may know, I am chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and thus, we impact every part of your life one way or another. The subject of fatherhood about which we are talking is extremely important, and one where we need great improvement, so I appreciate very much your words.

Mr. Ballard?

STATEMENT OF CHARLES BALLARD, FOUNDER & CEO, INSTITUTE FOR RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. BALLARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to be here and to be a part of this, I think, historic attempt to change how America looks at families, fathers, and children.

Senator Breaux, you mentioned the 2 x 4. I would like to give something not that hard, but something in between, as having 22 years of experience in working with fathers around the country.

I think it is historic that the Senator has taken this issue on because it means that we have done a great job with welfare reform, as we know, in some States, and now it is time to complete that by addressing the issue of fatherhood in a very responsible way.

In 1998, Congressman Bill Archer made a statement that, "The Institute for Responsible Fatherhood is a positive force to strengthen families and to restore responsibility to our communities around America." Essentially, what we do is create multiple sites, nationally around the country, presently operating nine sites, and we are successful in these communities.

Now, we are receiving letters from around the country from rural areas and suburban areas because of our success in the inner city.

We take a married couple that we have trained and place them in high-risk communities. They live among the people. They knock on doors. They reach inner city people and end up hiring those people to then go back into the community to begin working with their neighbors. They must be risk-free: no alcohol, no drugs, and so on, individuals who are willing to be available 24/7 for the families. It is an intensive, home-based program.

Now, we have an organization in the community, but we believe that unless we go to the people, knock on their doors, live in their communities, we cannot be effective. I think over the years we have spent billions of dollars in trying to resolve problems in the inner city, but we have to go to the people, where the problems are.

You probably heard recently that, of all the new AIDs cases in America, 61 percent are in the black community. We are only 20 percent of the country's population, but 61 percent of all new AIDs cases.

So we not only have a situation with fatherhood, but we are bringing fathers back with high morbidity, heart attack driven, and of course this whole idea of AIDs. It is interesting, because the women and children are dying, but the father is the one who is carrying this awful disease.

In 1993, the University of Ohio came and evaluated our program, and they found that 97 percent of our fathers were paying child support and involved with their children. It is because we hire married couples who go back into the community and live among the people that they are servicing. They are modeling the concept of responsible fatherhood.

I am not against a law that makes men do the right thing, but I think taking the approach to model the concept is far more effective.

Now, we choose 16,000 household communities that are headed largely by females in high-crime, low-income neighborhoods. We seed those communities with married couples that are loving and secure in a relationship who go into those communities and actually live there. Some are buying homes, some are leasing the homes. We hire staff from the community.

In other words, we train people in those communities. They had drug problems, there were fathers who abandoned their families, there were fathers who were abusive, and now we are transforming these men from the inside out and they start, in their own communities, to make a difference.

We hire people who are willing to go to the community. Someone said, how do you do this? Well, you go to the people. The people who have the problems, you go to them to help them resolve their problems.

How do we do this in the program? We have a seven cylinder intervention approach. We want to change how men think, about themselves, about their families, and about their fathers, so we have a mental health piece that helps educate on the importance of father involvement. They control the attitudes, alcohol, and, of course, substance abuse.

We also have a program that deals with the family directly. We go into the community and work with the mother and the father and children in order to create this strong approach to fatherhood.

Now, I indicated earlier that there is an increase in AIDs in this community, so we want the father to have the best of health. So it is important for us to reduce morbidity and mortality in order to create safe communities for our children.

We also have a pilot program that enhances wealth creation through individual's development of savings accounts. It is important for fathers not only to understand how to make money, but how to save money, and also to invest it.

We discover in our program, that once the father is back involved with the families, their children who were F students go from F to A. It is a major transformation when the father is involved with their families.

We believe that employment is very important, but also men should think of entrepreneurial things. Not to just have a job, but willing to perform at a high level. Using our seven cylinder intervention approach, we have employed and retained fatherhood and jobs, 77.2 percent.

We are talking about the worst-case scenario, a man who has a poor work history, a man who has been in prison, but through our program are being retained after 6 months at 77.2 percent. This all leads to what we call community development. Having fathers be responsible for their families, we can create a better community.

I have just a couple of recommendations I want to make to you in closing. Number one, we urge that you pass legislation prior to recess. We believe that the House and Senate approach has merit, but the competitive national grant process, as opposed to the block grant, is preferable. The States already have, as the Senator said, over \$8 billion that they are not spending. But having a competitive approach, I believe, we can document that monies are more effectively and efficiently used.

Number two, we need to have a clear standard of marriage in America for role modeling to exemplify the whole family. So, we want to have family formation as a lodestone of this legislation.

We believe that a project of national significance in the House must also be adopted in legislation so that an increase in marriage and married couple models can be fully demonstrated and evaluated.

It is one thing to have a program, but we need to be able to evaluate what we are doing in order to replicate it across the country.

Of course, by doing so we will be able to reduce infant mortality, reduce child abuse and neglect, reduce teenage pregnancy, and increase vibrant families in America. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ballard appears in the appendix.]

Senator JEFFORDS. Thank you.

Dr. Johnson?

STATEMENT OF DR. JEFFERY JOHNSON, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL CENTER FOR STRATEGIC NONPROFIT PLANNING AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. JOHNSON. Good afternoon, Senator Jeffords, Senator Breaux. I also want to thank Chairman Nickles and other members of the U.S. Senate Finance Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy for this opportunity to testify on current fatherhood initiatives.

I am Jeffery Johnson, president and chief executive officer of the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership, a national nonprofit intermediary organization dedicated to strengthening organizations to serve people in communities for the future.

I believe that these hearings are a demonstration of your insight into what I believe is one of the root causes of many of our sociological dysfunctions today: the rampant epidemic of fatherlessness across our Nation.

These hearings are a recognition that, for far too long, we have neglected the aspect of fatherhood in American families' social policy, and I commend you for your insight and caring during this hectic legislative session.

If you are successful in passing S. 1364 sponsored by Senators Bayh and Domenici or some similar responsible fatherhood bill that squarely addresses the new demographic of the welfare system, fragile families, it will be an important step in providing much-needed general support, not only to fathers who need the strengthening, but to their families, and most importantly, their children.

I have more than 20 years' of experience working with fathers and families, as well as my own personal experience on which to base my testimony. I had the wonderful opportunity of being reared in a family with two loving parents for 12 years. Unfortunately, my father died at the age of 39, leaving behind a widow and 10 children.

Despite the positive example set by my mother, life was a struggle. In those days, she, like tens of thousands of single parents in this country today, struggled to make ends meet. Each of my brothers and sisters also faced their own unique challenges related to having only our mother to raise us.

I also experienced what some researchers call "father hunger." I yearned for my dad. I still yearn for my dad. I have often thought about, and been grateful for, the lessons he taught me regarding work, responsibility, and parenting. I know first hand the importance of fathers and families, and I bring that knowledge to my work each day.

I would like to make some points that are in my prepared testimony that I think are essential in thinking about fatherhood.

First, is that fatherhood initiatives represent the unfinished business of welfare reform. As we move fragile families—and let me define fragile families for you.

It is defined as two low-skilled biological parents and their children, if we move them off of welfare, it becomes critical for family formation and child well-being to provide them with multifaceted support and assistance so that they can work as a team, both mothers and fathers, to support their children in every sense, legally, emotionally, financially.

You have heard today several times the term "dead broke dads." Let me define dead broke dads. Immature, young, often unemployable and therefore poor, candidates for marriage. The population served by our National project, called Partners for Fragile Families, is the Nation's first comprehensive fatherhood program that focuses on dead broke dads.

These are fathers who are willing to pay child support, but are unable to pay child support. Unlike dead broke dads, deadbeat dads are able, but unwilling to meet their financial child support obligations.

The Partners for Fragile Families project is under way in 10 test cities, and it brings together a broad coalition. It takes a village to support children. It takes a village to support young parents.

So we brought together community-based organizations, Federal and State child support enforcement agencies, private employers, and others in the first comprehensive national initiative designed

to: (1) facilitate the long-term involvement of poor fathers in the lives of children; and (2) to increase these young fathers' earnings potential to a family sustaining wage.

The Strengthening Fragile Families initiative works to develop a comprehensive infrastructure to support fragile families, funded with private and public dollars.

Strengthening Fragile Families represents a partnership that leverages resources in a broad coalition towards the shared goal of strong, independent, productive families where children are well cared for by both mother and father.

The Strengthening Fragile Families initiative brings together researchers, policymakers, practitioners, child support enforcement and other Federal and State entities like the U.S. Department of Labor in a collaborative effort with two difficult, but feasible, objectives: collect significant amounts of child support from the most disadvantaged fathers who, again, have been willing but unable to pay, and to devise a means of inducing these fathers to enter into stable relationships, including marriage, with the mothers of their children. The emotional foundation for these relationships already exist.

Strengthening Fragile Families initiative research shows that most young fathers are highly involved in the lives of their children and their children's mother at the birth and during the early childhood years.

I have two charts here I would like to refer you to. Chart one.

Senator JEFFORDS. We will suspend the time limit, so please keep going.

Dr. JOHNSON. All right. Thank you, Senator.

Chart one shows that 30 percent of children under the age of two and born outside of marriage live with both their biological parents. Another 32 percent live with their mothers and see their fathers once per week.

Chart two. Chart two shows that just over a quarter of poor children—and these are all poor children, black, brown, red, yellow—spend their first 2 years in a fragile family. But as children get older, this family type declines.

By the time poor children are in their teens, and you can follow the chart down, what you find is that when these poor children become teens, however, only 5 percent live in a fragile family and 59 percent live with their mother, their dad is not highly involved. Thus, poor children end up in a single-mother family with an uninvolved father, but when poor children are young, both parents are more likely than not to be involved.

Senator, this is an opportunity for our work. Our Partnership for Fragile Families project meets these couples where they are and begins to work with these couples on issues that relate to the relationship, the challenges that this individual father faces, which may be substance abuse, he may have a criminal record. We have created a legal clinic as part of our project, all in the effort to give this father the tools he needs to be the best parent he can be.

A lot of these fathers, as I said earlier, want to do the right thing by their children, but what they need is help and support of programs like the Partners for Fragile Families project to do just that.

Finally, I would say, the PFF program is new, but it has an excellent prognosis. Anecdotal reports suggest that the Partnership for Fragile Families project is succeeding in helping young fathers become responsible workers and good parents.

In addition, preliminary research data showed that the Access, Support, and Advancement Program, ASAP, an intensive job training program administered by a PFF community-based partner, Strive, Inc., in New York, in Harlem, shows that PFF grantees are succeeding in training and job placement with a difficult population.

Listen to this data: of 567 participants enrolled in Boston and New York ASAP, a total of 308 participants were placed in jobs after 2 years. The average yearly salary for Boston graduates was \$22,308, and in New York, \$20,301.

Comparably, the average earnings for dead broke dads without this kind of intervention is below the individual poverty level, at about \$7,000 annually.

Senator, again, we cannot over-emphasize the significance of Federal legislation emphasizing the importance of fatherhood and the role that fathers must play in their families and communities. Passage of such legislation would be a clear signal that fathers are indeed important to families and should be acknowledged for their unique contribution to the well-being of children.

Enabling fathers as well as mothers to become a meaningful, positive force in the lives of their children is the goal that every American can support. The seeds of change have been cultivated by a few foundations in a few States. It is now time for the Federal Government to play a more significant role in the development and institutionalization of these programs.

By doing so, the Federal Government could ensure the sustainability of programs to support poor fathers and the inclusion of the role of fathers as a permanent fixture of our social service delivery program.

Again, I thank you for the time that you have afforded me, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Senator JEFFORDS. Thank you, Dr. Johnson.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Johnson appears in the appendix.]

Senator JEFFORDS. Mr. Levy?

STATEMENT OF DAVID L. LEVY, ESQ. PRESIDENT, CHILDREN'S RIGHTS COUNCIL, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. LEVY. Good afternoon. Thank you for your leadership, Senators, on this important issue. I am David L. Levy, an attorney and president of the Children's Rights Council, representing chapters in 32 States, Washington, DC, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Our advisors include Senator Fred Thompson, Senator Bob Graham, Dear Abby, and other prominent Americans.

Our board of directors includes Sam Brunelli, who is known to many of you on the committee, and Lee Yarborough, and Teresa Kaiser, head of the Maryland Child Support Office. We have nine college student interns here this summer, and our office manager.

We fully support the Bayh-Domenici bill. We think very highly of the House-passed bill and we fully support the pass-through that Senator Kohl is the leader of.

By the way, my first wife divorced me about 20 years ago, but we had a wonderful son. We still do. He just graduated college. No one had to beat me over the head with a 2 x 4, because I was involved in my son's life from the beginning. I have supported him through college, even though no child support order made me do it. I wanted to because I was involved.

Our Children's Rights Council hears from many parents who feel pushed away, forced away—and this includes some of the two million mothers without custody—and they want to be more involved.

We suggest that you provide more specific examples—I think, Senator Breaux, this fits in with your thought—in any legislation you pass. In Section 102, "Use of Funds," Part 5 of the Bayh-Domenici bill, we suggest you provide examples such as marriageability preparation classes, parenting education, counseling, mediation, shared parenting, parenting plans, assistance with access enforcement, access counseling, transfer centers for children, and web sites so that fathers and mothers are prepared to get married, and if married, stay married, and to nurture their children. There is ample precedent in block grants for specific examples of programs Congress could prioritize.

Our Children's Rights Council gave awards to seven States July 19 who led the way in preparing for marriageability, sustaining marriages, and to helping the 23 million children with never-married parents and the 18 million children of divorce.

Last week we gave those awards to Florida, Oklahoma, California, Kansas, Connecticut, Wisconsin, and Montana. I would like to break them into three parts.

First, preparing for marriageability. Florida passed a Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act in which young people who intend to marry get a break in the marriage license fee if they will take a six-hour parenting preparation course. They must also take mediation if they get separated.

Compatibility testing is also very important to help prepare young people decide if they should get married or not. We agree that removing the barriers, especially the tax barriers, to marriage will also help.

So those are just three things right there, premarital counseling, compatibility testing, and removing the barriers that can help young people to decide to get married if they wish to.

Ways to sustain marriage includes marriage counseling, parenting resources, and shared parenting. Shared parenting is normally thought of as an aspect of divorce, but CRC has found, by analyzing government data, that the States with the highest amount of shared parenting in 1989 and 1990 had subsequently the lowest divorce rates in 1991 through 1995.

The cooperative spirit learned during shared parenting and focusing on the well-being of children are apparently the answers for this.

Shared parenting means a child spends at least a third of the time on a year-round basis with a parent. The fear of not being able to live with their children is the biggest reason why parents

fear divorce, according to economists Margaret Brinig and Douglas Allen in a published report. They have found that where joint custody is the norm, it helps to preserve marriages and protect children. So, researchers are finding positive outcomes for shared parenting.

The third part is ways to maintain two parents in a child's life for never-married, separated and divorced parents. In the Welfare Reform Act, there is \$10 million to help States set up access sites, transfer of children sites, parent education and mediation and parenting plans. All this is helping, but the demand is enormous; \$10 million, or even \$160 million from this bill, will not be enough.

Never-married parents account for 40 to 50 percent of the parents who are using those sites.

CRC also recommend expedited pro se legal handling of access denial complaints, promote parent education classes, promote divorce mediation as an alternative to litigation, and promote Friends of the Court such as exist in Michigan to help gain access (visitation) for children and parents.

We strongly ask that you pass a bill as soon as possible and go to conference. This legislation, with all due respect, Senators, needs to be passed quickly. We cannot afford to wait another year. Another year is another year lost for many children in this country.

There are three objections I have heard to this kind of legislation. One, there is supposedly no trickle down of resources to the children. One quarter of fathers who do not pay child support do not do so because they cannot afford it.

This percentage is substantially higher in America's inner cities. For those who can pay, studies have shown the single biggest reason they do not is that they are not connected to their children.

The second objection I have heard, is their supposed lack of statistical data to justify fatherhood legislation. This is true in part, but more evidence is being developed and this could be remedied by building a statistical, evaluative component into these grants, which we would support.

The third objection is that money should not be given to fatherhood programs because fathers are, by their nature, the source of family violence. Most of you in this room know that most fathers are not violent, yet we always want to err on the side of children.

This is an issue we have to tackle head on as we fund fatherhood programs. In the programs I am aware of, most parents have never been abusive, but those who have been abusive, learn how not to be abusive.

The programs I am aware of are carefully monitored and structured. Should there be abuse, it would be reported to the proper agencies. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Levy appears in the appendix.]
Senator JEFFORDS. Thank you. Thank you all.

We will now have some questions to help us better understand how you can help, and how we can help.

Dr. Levy, the Responsible Fatherhood Act provides grant money to encourage States and communities to begin media campaigns with themes of responsible fatherhood. Is there a strong need for these kinds of media campaigns, and if so, which are the most effective?

Mr. LEVY. Well, media campaigns have their place, but we think they are only one aspect of about 10 or 15 things Congress should authorize, the other 13 or 14 among those that I have mentioned.

We need real programs that deliver services, which is what our Children's Rights Council does in six States, Maryland, New York, Illinois, Ohio, Virginia, Nebraska, and D.C., to actually have programs where, on a Friday night, say a mom brings the child to the center, usually in a church, and the father comes and picks up the child a few minutes later. Two days later on Sunday, dad brings back the child and mom picks the child up for the rest of the week.

We have had some fathers, and even some mothers, if you can believe it, who are seeing their children for the first time because of these centers which we monitor. They are all court referred and the centers are well-structured and well-run. So to answer your question, we need more programs, yes. Actual programs.

Senator JEFFORDS. Dr. Johnson, what do you see as the ultimate goal of the Fatherhood Initiative, is it to promote marriage and the involvement of fathers in the family or is it to collect child support?

Dr. JOHNSON. It has to be both. Marriage is something that, ideally, is a situation that young people aspire to do, and do. But at the same time, a lot of things happen, unfortunately, where marriage is not the best option because of abuse or some other factor.

So in these matters involving children on public welfare, child support has to be in place. But we do think that when child support is used as a mechanism, it should be based on the father's ability to pay.

The fathers that we work with in our Partners for Fragile Families project are young, low-skilled. If they worked last year, they worked for a couple of months. Their annual incomes were not over \$7,000.

It seems to me that current child support guidelines, that would extract a large amount, if not all, of that \$7,000 and it is really not the way to go, because what it does is forces these guys underground, and then sooner than later, these guys fall out of the relationship with the child and the child's mother altogether.

So I think that the movement is about a combination of things. There are some that talk about, and I support, marriage. There is also the issue of marriageability that we are directly involved with.

I think that if we could provide the right interventions, particularly through support of the Bayh-Domenici bill, that we are going to have a lot of these couples that decide to marry, and some of them have already married as a result of these programs being in place.

Senator, it is interesting. It is almost like we have approached this work in the past as that every young person should know the right thing to do when a child is expected, but in many respects there are a lot of young people who never get exposed to positive role models. They never get exposed to parents who are married, so they can learn. I learned through osmosis, the right thing to do. I came from a family of 10 children. You should know that my father was a preacher, and his philosophy about having children—

Senator JEFFORDS. That does not surprise me. [Laughter.]

Dr. JOHNSON. He would have as many as he could support. But I think the reality was, I saw that, but many young people—millions of young people—are not growing up with fathers in the home.

So what we have got to do in those situations, is create the opportunity not to rehab, because you are not trying to return this child to something that they have seen before, what you are doing is starting from the very beginning.

That is why these parenting education programs, these programs that work to increase the skills and labor market potential of these fathers, are so critical. So, those are very, very important aspects of the fatherhood movement that should be acknowledged and looked at as well.

Senator JEFFORDS. Mr. Ballard, your group promotes responsible fatherhood through marriage and the family. You have said yourself that you cannot preach marriage. How then are you able to instill the importance of marriage in communities where that is not valued?

Mr. BALLARD. Senator, we understand that fact clearly. We take married couples that are loving, nurturing couples who move back into the inner city community, they live in the midst of 16,000 households, they walk the streets, they knock on doors. They talk to the women, and the women give us the men's name. The female part of the marriage will work with the woman, and the male goes and finds the fathers.

We discovered that men and women are willing to come together if the force of the court is not involved. So by having these married couples to model marriage—I think we want to do the right thing, but I think sometimes a big stick does more damage than good. It actually drives the man and woman apart.

So by modeling marriage, by supporting men in caring for their children, I think, is the right way to go. We are doing our National training in the South this week, and the boys and girls are with their families. We have over 100 people on our staff, and about 55 children were at this meeting.

They put on a play last night, and it was a play of one girl playing the role of a specialist for the institute. She goes to the home where another girl is and, pregnant, she has the baby out of wedlock, and the emphasis that these kids made, is at the end of the program, the boy and the girl walked down the aisle and got married.

Now, we don't push marriage, we model it. But the boys and girls in our family see marriage no matter what as the end situation. I grew up in the South, Alabama, in the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's. My dad died very early in my life. He was married to my mom. But I saw mostly married couples.

I saw homes where there was a man having the blessing for the families. The problems we see today, the crime problems, the drug problems, were not there because the families were intact, working together.

Today, fathers, by government, are allowed to move out, to go away, or to impregnate and leave. So our program is to move in among the people, live among them, and model responsible father-

hood and teach them by example and precept how to be good parents.

We are seeing a turn-around of people who would not get married are now getting married. I think to make this a successful approach in America, we are going to have to promote marriage by example and by precept.

Senator JEFFORDS. Ms. Lynn, studies show that a child that is a child of an incarcerated person is much more likely to end up in jail than a child who is not.

What, if any, programs do you have or do you visualize that, would help under those circumstances? Should be some special effort made, to reach these families?

Representative LYNN. Well, I will tell you two situations. First, a situation in which I am directly involved with a group of women who have incarcerated spouses, they have children that they have been raising by themselves.

Several, for a period of 20 years, have kept those children involved with their parents under very dire, very difficult situations, having them visit in prisons, but have kept that relationship up and have raised very successful children, children who have stayed out of trouble.

But we also have a program going in the State of Florida in one particular area especially where incarcerated dads who are about to be released, or soon to be released, have the opportunity of working or participating in a program where they are set aside in a special pod.

They are actually taught family relationships, they are taught the skills of parenting, they have conflict management, anger management, they are taught skills readying them for the world of work, and the world of getting back into working with families.

One of the most dedicated, serious, hammer-type correction officers I know has been working with these men in the prison and said, over many, many years, he never dreamt that this could work, but it has worked so unbelievably well.

Now, that is not to say every person wants and can be in that program, but the majority who have gone in there have found that they have built a family relationship amongst themselves, and when they are going out they will be more than ready to take a role, not only in the family, but also in the world of work.

It is something that we are trying to replicate. The stories that these men have to tell are certainly inspiring and need to be—you talked about media. That is the kind of campaign we need, people who have actually been there, been incarcerated, been in trouble who have experienced all the serious problems of difficult living in poverty, getting out and saying that there is another way.

I would also like to say that a clarification of what was stated earlier. I think it was said that there were \$8 billion unspent dollars. Actually, there are only \$2 billion unspent dollars in terms of what the States have left, and it is decreasing with the new HHS regulations.

Also, States feel that it is a necessity to set some dollars aside. Sometimes you cut back and then we are in a terrible predicament if we spend all of our money. Also, we know that our case loads could increase, and that we have to be prepared for this.

I will end by saying it is most important, please, that you set the stage for us. When the local governments and communities see that States say it is important to have fatherhood or other programs, they jump on the bandwagon.

By the same token, when you as the Federal Government say it is important, fatherhood initiatives are going to make our world better, help our children, and also help the financial situations of families, then you make it so important that States all over our Nation will quickly, all of us, jump on the bandwagon if we have not already. Then, of course, anything you do must coordinate with those State efforts that already exist.

Mr. LEVY. Very briefly.

Senator JEFFORDS. Certainly.

Mr. LEVY. I called my State of Maryland yesterday, and for the reasons Ms. Lynn said, the State of Maryland reports it has no remaining unspent funds from TANF.

Senator JEFFORDS. Thank you. We will pass that information on to some of our skeptics.

Yes, Senator Breaux?

Senator BREAUX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank the panel for their presentation.

Representative Lynn, some have said that the States may not like the concepts in the Kohl and the Bayh bill because both bills would essentially force the States to give up these collections of funds that they are now treating as revenues. But I take it, on behalf of the Council of State Legislatures, there is an agreement that you do support this type of effort?

Representative LYNN. We support everything but mandates, sir. We are very concerned. I think you can realize that those of us who have actually become very involved in fatherhood initiatives, and there are more coming on board all the time, we want to do it in the best way we know how.

We also are affected by everything you do financially, so that when you mandate or when you change rules midstream, it is very, very difficult for us. So we would prefer, if there is any way possible, to give us the opportunity to do all these things in the bills, but without mandates.

Senator BREAUX. I think it is an option, as I read the bill. I think it says the States would be allowed to direct the payments directly to the families as opposed to going to the State, correct?

Representative LYNN. Yes.

Senator BREAUX. So I take it, with that, you are in support of what they are trying to do?

Representative LYNN. Yes, sir.

Senator BREAUX. I was very intrigued by an article that I was reading in the National Journal about the situation in Florida with regard to national fisheries and the program down in Tampa.

I take it that in Florida, like in most States, fathers who lag behind for a period of time in their child support payments face court orders, obviously, to pay. Then if they do not, they face potential jail time.

I think that one of the bills that we passed in the Congress, as a matter of fact, that the President supported—in 1998, President Clinton signed a bill that would make it a felony for a parent to

owe more than \$10,000 in support for a child, and in other States, to be 2 years behind in payments.

But the experience in Florida, is that you were sending a lot of people to jail and housing them, and they were not able to earn any money, so they were not able to pay their child support payments, and it was a vicious cycle.

One of the programs that was talked about was a non-custodial parent employment project, which took people who found themselves in that category and gave them an option: you can either go into the program or you can go to jail, you pick it. An awful lot of them, not surprisingly, participated in the program.

Can you comment about that, are you familiar with it?

Representative LYNN. Yes, Yes, I am. It is a great problem when you are trying to do the hammer approach, which for years now we have all been doing because that has been the way to go. We have taken away licenses, we do not allow licensing for boats, for cars, for anything. We have used jail. We will do round-ups for a weekend, and all of a sudden payments come through.

But we also do talk about two different populations. Yes, this program you are talking about, in Tampa, I believe it is, had great success in getting people to pay their support by providing the opportunity for them to get into jobs and get trained and so forth.

The other thing about the media, by the way, it is very important that you will find that it is very hard to reach out to many of the men who are low-income and that we are particularly talking about today, particularly in the minority community which I work with a great deal.

They are fearful of the system to some degree. They like to go underground because of that. So reaching out and saying, this is something that you are going to benefit from, and all of us benefit from, is something that is essential. So as you consider the campaign aspect of this, that is part of what we do need. That approach that we are taking in Tampa does work. We want to do more of it.

We do need to have two ways of approaching this because somewhere along the line we have to get sophisticated enough to know that there are those who absolutely do not want to pay. There are those fathers. But then there are also these that are dead broke, and if we can reach out to them and actually get them into the programs, they will pay.

Senator BREAUX. I think that you all have really hit on something with that. I am not sure if it is a county program, a city program.

Representative LYNN. It is one that the Fatherhood Commission funds.

Senator BREAUX. I think that is the carrot and the stick type of an approach. I mean, the courts require the participating employers to withhold part of each participant's paycheck for the current and back child support, and the money, which averages one-third of the paycheck, is sent directly to the State, then to the child.

Representative LYNN. Yes, sir.

Senator BREAUX. Then the worker is getting a portion of it, too. It talks about, the success continues, even after the fathers grad-

uate from the six-month program. It found that 55 percent of them continued to pay their child support after moving on.

That is the type of carrot and stick approach which I think really works. It gives them a job, helps them have the money to pay the child support, but also has the threat that if you do not participate, there is another option out there.

I guess I would raise one of the concerns, and Mr. Ballard and Dr. Johnson, I guess you are all really in a hands-on type of program where you are reaching out, going into the houses and actually doing these type of programs. I sort of question to some extent the media campaign. It seems that a lot of these things that we do never get to the people that we are really trying to get to.

I mean, would you rather have us spend the money on television ads, which are attractive ads, or would you rather have the money for something like you do, to get out there and grab them by the shoulders and speak directly to them? I mean, do media campaigns really work? I mean, I am a great believer in ads, but it seems like a lot of people, intended to affect her mind, but did not.

Can you comment on that?

Mr. BALLARD. Senator, many of these men have deep-seated issues about their fathers, issues about abandonment and neglect. A media campaign, which I think has merit, kind of goes over their head. I remember when we were trying to bomb Iraq and did a great job, spent billions of dollars, but when it was all over, the guy was still there.

What I said was, why don't we go in with hand-to-hand combat and take him out? I think that is good for the media campaign, but we need to have hand-to-hand contact in the community next door.

Now, our workers live in the community and they see their fathers twice, three times a week. But when they go to the grocery store, he sees them. He goes to church, he sees them, to the drug store, to get his hair cut. So we are going to see him four, five times a week. I mean, it is a workable program. What is missing in the communities are good, loving, compassionate models.

Now, when I came out of prison 41 years ago, my son was 5 years old. I had not seen him, had no involvement with him, but I wanted to go and be with him. My heart had been changed. I did drugs, alcohol, heavy in violence. But when my heart was changed by God, through Jesus Christ, I came home to find him. The woman was so impressed, she said, well, why do you not adopt him? I took him with me.

Today, he is 45 years of age. He is married, has five children. He has never done drugs, alcohol, cigarettes. He is a vegetarian, a long-distance runner, and he is a financial consultant. He has three grandchildren, all doing well.

Now, I came home from prison, but I broke the cycle. Now, when we help men in prison, as she indicated, to get their lives together, we must also help the women to get their lives together.

Many men come home from prison and there is no family left behind, so they come home and within 6 months to a year, they recidivate. We need to work with both situations, because men in prison are being infected with HIV-AIDs.

They come home and pass it on to women who are unsuspecting. So I think we need to have that hand-to-hand combat. The media

is all right. When I am on TV or when I am on the radio, we get calls, but we have got to go out to those homes.

So the media has some place, but not as important as the hand-to-hand, in-the-community modeling concept that is so needed.

Senator BREAUX. It is a wonderful personal story. I take it, by what I heard, that makes you a great-grandfather?

Mr. BALLARD. Sort of.

Senator BREAUX. Congratulations.

Mr. BALLARD. My youngest son. My oldest boy is 45. I did not marry his mother because she had found somebody else, so she gave me my son.

I have a 15-year old at home who is an A+ student, a 15-year old girl who is an A+ student, and a 6-year-old son. I read to them all the time. We have a wonderful family.

My wife and I grew up in poverty, yet we are leading a movement to do what we have, and that is create responsible fatherhood.

Now, I was reading to my son, my six-year old, one night about angels. He was four at the time. All of a sudden, this big smile on his face. I said, what? He said, daddy, you are my angel and you protect me. Every boy and girl, the 24 million children that are going to bed tonight, should be read to by their fathers so that the boy and girl sees, not Michael Jordan or Magic Johnson as their model, but dad.

We must bring them back, not to just pay child support, but as loving, compassionate, secure, healthy men who are going to break the cycle and make a difference.

We just want a chance, through competitive grant awards, to go through those communities, the hard communities, and reach those fathers. As we work with the worst-case scenario, the suburbs are calling, whatever they are calling, we have proven that it works.

If we put together a strong, national initiative, it is going to go back into the community and model responsible fatherhood, parenthood, motherhood, I know that America can be all the country it should be.

Senator BREAUX. Dr. Johnson?

Dr. JOHNSON. Yes, Senator Breaux. I would think that a media campaign is important, but it has to connect directly to the population groups where you are really trying to change the behaviors. One of the things that we have been particularly successful with is a concept called town hall meeting.

We had a town hall meeting in Harlem, New York at one of the historic churches there, and it was an opportunity to really engage the community in that it was a media-oriented event.

What we did with the media to attract the young fathers there that we are talking about, we used young celebrities who were responsible images. Despite what you may hear from some of the hip-hop artists, some of those hip-hop artists are saying positive messages.

My son is a 19-year-old junior at Morehouse College, and they read a magazine called Source. Everything is not good in Source, so I do not want to leave you that impression.

But they read Source, and the guys like my son, they are looking for the positive stuff and they listen to the positive hip-hop artists.

Anyway, one of the positive hip-hop artists by the name of Mose Deff was featured in this Source magazine article of our town hall meeting.

My son called me at 12:30 in the morning once he got a copy of Source magazine. Of course, I wished that he was in the bed studying for class. [Laughter.]

But he called me, and what they were talking about was that they had seen NPCL's name in Source magazine, they saw Mose Deff, and what they were talking about from the article is responsible fatherhood behavior.

That is very, very important, because I do think that media efforts that are not directed at the end user, really these young people we have got to get at. I do think that sometimes these media campaigns can create a disconnect and they are really not relevant to the lives of many of these young people.

I think that what we have also been able to do, and some of the programs actually hire the young fathers themselves after they have gone through the program to be the role models and to be the community outreach people for these different types of programs.

So I just think that if you are going to pay for it, it really should communicate a message that you clearly want and it has to resonate with the end user. I do think that we have had some success with it, but it has to be targeted, it has to involve other young people that young people look to as role models, even in the hip-hop world. I think that that is kind of what we have done, and I think is important.

But giving me the money for the programs is where the action is, because what I need to be able to do is put in place a local infrastructure that is going to be able to meet that young father where he is and help him be the best parent he can be.

Sometimes that is going to require that I work with him with his substance abuse problem, sometimes it is going to mean if he is a batterer, I need to take advantage of a batterer's program.

Would you believe that in two of our sites, in Baltimore and Racine sites, some of the guys have been screened to be potential abusers? When we went out in the community to look for batterers education programs, there were none available.

That is so critical. If we are really going to respond to the issue of domestic violence, which we support, we have to make sure that there are resources available for these programs to be able to get the type of counseling and support that these young fathers need so they can not be abusive to themselves or to their families.

Finally, I would say that, again, as was mentioned earlier, it is so important that we create opportunities for these fathers to be formally involved in the life of their children, up to and including making sure that their child support passes through to them. So in that regard, we do support the Kohl bill.

I want to take this opportunity to also acknowledge three people in the audience who have been pioneers in this work and that really support this whole work around fragile families, and also pass-through: Dr. Ron Mensi, who is currently a professor at Clem University; Ms. Elaine Sorenson.

Senator JEFFORDS. Would you mind standing so we can see you? Thank you.

Dr. JOHNSON. They have been, really, research pioneers in this whole area of fatherhood and are really responsible for much of what we know today in terms of how to begin to think about working with these fragile couples.

Also, Vicki Tereski. Vicki Tereski has been working with Senator Kohl on the pass-through.

These are things, again, where we have got to create an infrastructure which is going to create hope and opportunity for young people who really do not think that society cares about them.

You know that when young people think that society does not care about them, then they do not think their life matters very much. When you get a young person at that level, that young person becomes dangerous.

Senator BREAUX. Thank you very much.

Senator JEFFORDS. Well, thank you all. I just want to ask one follow-up question. I am, as I said, Chairman of the H.E.L.P. Committee. We may, hopefully, get involved in the zero to five age group with funds for helping parents, child care centers, and others who care for our children.

How important is that aspect of a child's life? Ms. Lynn?

Representative LYNN. Thank you, sir. Senators, I can only express to you that, in the State of Florida, we think it is so very essential that we have just passed this past year legislation—actually, it passed the year before—that has initiated a birth to five school readiness program that is overseen at the State level with a very non-bureaucratic board that simply sets up standards and approves plans, but is initiated through a total comprehensive approach at the local levels with partnerships with businesses, health organizations, et cetera. It goes on and on. Day care, public/private, faith-based. That is essential.

In fact, I was talking earlier to NSCL representatives about how important it is to try to tie in the early childhood sections to the fatherhood initiatives, because as you can see, fathers love to get involved when their children are younger, so that is where it starts. That is part of the whole educational program, too.

There is a very important educational component. It starts from birth and it carries over into the Educational Commission, and I oversee all of our education in the State as well as this part that we are talking about today.

Senator JEFFORDS. So you would not mind some more support for those efforts, right?

Representative LYNN. We would love it.

Mr. LEVY. May I also acknowledge the three people Jeffery Johnson mentioned a moment ago, because they help all of us in the pro-family movement.

Second, I would like to emphasize that the Children's Rights Council, like Charles Ballard's group and NPCL, also do hands-on.

For example, our transfer sites, that is hands-on, helping children and families to transfer a child from one parent to another peaceably for a weekend.

Most people who use child transfer sites are court referral because there have communication problems with the other spouse, are reentering the family after some time, or have substance abuse issues.

Only a small number are family violence cases that are court referred to those neutral drop-off sites in various States. We do run one supervised access site where a parent cannot leave the premises. Those are generally more serious communication problems or other situations where the parent has to stay at the site for two hours to see his child, and cannot remove the child from the site.

This is all transitional parenting. We hope, with sufficient respect and decency and learning about parenting, parents can eventually cooperate peaceably, especially if there is a little parenting education and counseling that goes on ancillary to that.

Dr. JOHNSON. Senator Jeffords, let me just respond by saying that my background and training is to be a school superintendent, so I am a renegade in the fatherhood movement because they needed someone to come in and help manage the thing.

But let me just say, in a very specific way, if you look at this bar chart, again, as you can see, the opportunity to begin to work with these young families is at the earliest ages, zero to about age three or four.

So we are working directly with the National Head Start Association. We formed a partnership. In our 10 PFF sites, one of the requirements is to really work through these programs, to recruit dads into the programs, because we are aware of the brain research that is saying how influential a father's presence is early in the life of a child.

We know that every success indicator, from early education on up to high school and college, that children do better when both mothers and fathers are involved.

So, we would be delighted by the opportunity to share some of the work that we have been doing with the precise population that you are talking about as part of your other work, and we think that the evidence will demonstrate very clearly that if we can use this window of opportunity created by the birth of a child as an opportunity to get both parents engaged in the life of their child then and hopefully over the long term, that we are going to have some positive results as might relate to the well-being of children, because every child, whether or not they are born in a married or never-married situation, needs every opportunity to grow and develop to reach their highest human potential.

Senator JEFFORDS. Thank you.

Mr. Ballard?

Mr. BALLARD. I would just like to add to that. My work began in 1976 at a hospital. My goal was to reduce infant mortality. We discovered, as has been known already, it is driven by low birth weight babies. The lower the birth weight, the less chance the child is going to survive beyond age one.

We involved 400 fathers that I worked with directly in groups and one-on-one with these women. Not one lady in that whole group whose child's father was involved with us before birth, not one had a child under six pounds.

We discovered that a father's nurturing and support during pregnancy will go a long way not only to reduce infant mortality, but extend the success of the child throughout life. Ten years later, we went back to find these fathers. Over 70 percent of the fathers were still involved, and most had gotten married.

So, I think it is important to do the zero to five, but more important, as you are in those communities where they live, to see the women who are pregnant, to get the father back involved during the pregnancy itself, and you are going to reduce infant mortality, but also create life chances for both the mother and for the child.

Mr. LEVY. On a final note, if I may.

Senator JEFFORDS. Yes lets ignore the time clock once again. Please keep going.

Mr. LEVY. Oh, you are very polite, Senator. Thank you, sir. If we can ask you, I think we are all in agreement here, to respectfully ask you to please pass this legislation as quickly as possible by the subcommittee, full committee, and Senate to get it into conference this year, if at all possible, because our children need it. This is not just a father's bill, it is to connect fathers to the mothers so that the children can benefit from better, more secure parenting. We cannot wait.

Senator JEFFORDS. Thank you. You have all been very helpful. I share your desire to move this legislation, and I will do all I can.

We are also trying to pass legislation to help the zero to five population as well. Thank you for very excellent and very, very useful testimony.

Now I will ask unanimous consent to enter my full statement into the record. I do not hear any objections. [Laughter.] Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Senator Jeffords appears in the appendix.]

[Whereupon, at 4:00 p.m., the hearing was concluded.]

APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**Testimony of
Charles A. Ballard, Founder and CEO
Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization**

Before the Senate Finance Committee, Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy
2:00 P.M. Tuesday, July 25, 2000, Room 215, Dirksen Senate Office Building

Thank you Mr. Chairman. It is heartening to see the United States Senate take up the issue of responsible fatherhood that is widely acknowledged as the next phase in our nation's welfare reform initiatives. In light of the urgency of this issue and the resulting spiral of youth crime, AIDS, dependency, and most of all the tragic impact of fatherlessness on the emotional and spiritual health of our children, I urge this Committee to give this matter your priority, front burner attention and to report out a bill prior to recess as the House has done.

In 1998, the Human Resources Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee chose to announce the Fathers Count legislation at the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization's (IRFFR) northeast Washington program office in a low-income housing project, with speakers and participants represented from six IRFFR sites across the country. Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Archer has stated that "The Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization is a positive force to strengthen families and restore responsibility in our communities across America."

IRFFR is the only multi-site, national responsible fatherhood organization of its kind placing married couple role models within America's at-risk neighborhoods and hiring talented outreach workers from within high-risk communities in nine cities. Our intensive one-on-one, home-based services effects dramatic change in the hearts of fathers to create loving, stable, nurturing home environments.

Founded in 1982, IRFFR has a longer track record of direct service to non-custodial fathers than any other local or national entity in this field. An evaluation of its program by Cleveland's Case Western Reserve University found that 97% of participating fathers spent more time with their children and provided financial support to their families.

Tennessee's Governor Sundquist recognized IRFFR's track record of capability and success by making our program a central component of the state's Families First initiative. IRFFR has been requested to expand its services in 70 cities across the country.

Key elements of our program are:

1. Targeting 16,000 mostly female-headed households in high-crime, low-income neighborhoods.
2. Re-seeding the targeted community with loving, secure, married couples who model a risk-free lifestyle.

3. Hiring Managing Partners and support staff who live in the target community.
4. Hiring staff who will be available 24 hours per day, seven days per week to provide services.
5. Hiring staff who are willing to go directly into the people's homes in order to provide services, working with one father at a time to resolve family problems and other related issues.

Once we engage the father in our program, we use a "Comprehensive 7-Cylinder" model of intervention:

1. **Enhanced Intra-personal Development (Mental Health):** This cylinder leads the father to a sense of responsibility, self control, and self worth, while overcoming alcoholism, substance abuse, and other destructive behaviors.
2. **Enhanced Family Development:** The reunifications of families, marriage, and emotional as well as financial child support are central to long-term success.
3. **Enhanced Physical Wellness** through healthy, risk-free lifestyles, health assessment and resultant plan of improved well being.
4. **Enhanced Financial Management and wealth creation through Individual Development Savings Accounts.**
5. **Enhanced Educational Development:** Fathers learn the importance of education for themselves and their children. Our experience is that children whose fathers are in our program experience an increased letter grade. Some have gone from an F to an A!
6. **Enhanced Entrepreneurial and Employment Development:** African-American males have the highest jobless rates in America. Much of this is brought on by educational failure, a prior conviction that may have led to incarceration and a poor work history. The success of this cylinder has resulted in fathers being employed and retained at a rate as high as 77.2% after a six-month assessment.
7. **Enhanced Community Development:** Fathers will take responsibility for their own behavior and work to reduce crime and assist their neighbors in doing the same.

For the past two years, we have implemented the Welfare-to-Work initiatives of the U.S. Department of Labor in an eight-city pilot initiative called *Reconnecting Fathers to their Families and to the Workplace*. According to the Labor Department's Government Technical Representative (GOTR), IRFFR is leading all other grantees in recruiting and placing non-custodial fathers into employment. More than 700 participants were placed into unsubsidized jobs at an average earnings of \$7.25 per hour. The Institute implemented a cutting edge demonstration with the following additional innovations and results to date:

Placement that exceeded original expectations and time frames in the IRFFR grant proposal;

Model collaborations between state TANF agencies, PICs, and community-based programs;

Extensive Field Monitoring Manuals, financial control systems, and accountability mechanisms.

The responsible fatherhood technology is embodied in the principle of "changing hearts" and attitudes of non-custodial fathers. The Institute has proven to be capable of transforming long-term welfare dependent individuals with histories of drug abuse, unemployment, domestic violence and other issues.

This unparalleled track record in the federal WtW program was further attested to in a sterling report issued by the Labor Department's Office of Performance Audits (OPA). The OPA review was ordered by the DOL Inspector General for the majority of new "round one" DOL program grantees to certify their capability of achieving performance and proper administration of federal grants of this magnitude.

The December 3, 1998 audit review letter to IRFFR from OPA Director Robert W. Curtis stated:

"IRFFR has developed operational manuals, monitoring guides, eligibility procedures and other technical guidance that will serve the organization well in managing the WtW (Welfare to Work) program. The IRFFR project management team includes former senior Health and Human Services officials (including a former Bush Administration HHS Assistant Secretary Joanne Barnhart and senior policy official Deborah Chasman) who have assisted IRFFR field offices in forging optimum service delivery partnerships with local welfare and private industry council agencies.

"Perhaps more importantly, IRFFR has developed a unique process for reaching out to the hard to reach non-custodial parent population. This process, developed by the founder (Charles Ballard), provides the means for Institute clients to eliminate the root causes of symptomatic problems that prevent them from becoming self-sufficient, responsible fathers. As ETA continues to identify successful methods and models for placing the most chronic long-term welfare dependent cases into the workforce, further examination of IRFFR's unique process for working with this population may prove beneficial.

"Although IRFFR's grant application anticipated that the first quarter would be devoted to start-up activities, IRFFR's reported first quarter performance exceeded its stated goals."

Recommendations

1. Again, we commend this Committee for addressing this issue today, as the House has in approving Fathers Count legislation. We urge your action on fatherhood legislation prior to

recess. We believe both the House and Senate approaches have merit, but the competitive, national grants approach in the House bill is preferable. As you know, the states already have tremendous amounts of surplus TANF funding. We believe that the targeted, competitive approach in the House bill is more likely to get the kind of documented results this Committee would expect. So we urge a unanimous consent resolution on the House approved Fathers Count bill, with consideration of the block grant approach contemplated in Bayh-Domenici in 2002, when the current TANF block grant expires.

2. A clear standard of marriage and married couple role models exemplifying the central importance of family formation should be a lodestar in this legislation.

3. We believe the "Projects of National Significance" in the House bill must also be adopted in the legislation, so that the precepts of marriage and married couple role models can be fully demonstrated and evaluated.

Based on our proven multi-site track record, we can quickly field such a multi-city demonstration with the following outcome indicators:

- reduction in out-of-wedlock pregnancy; increase in marriage and family formation
- increase in nurturing hours spent each month between fathers and their children
- unsubsidized placement of non-custodial fathers into the workforce
- increased provision of child support and paternity acknowledgment
- reduction in use of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes
- reduction in criminal activity including domestic violence
- increased educational achievement including high school diploma or GED, vocational school and college attendance

The evaluation component will also include net cost-benefits of the program to the taxpayer in comparison to current welfare benefit streams. Consider for a moment the fact that the primary reason prisons in our country are brimming with young minority males is due to the fact that fathers were missing in the lives of so many. When we consider the cost of maintaining an inmate father contrasted with a responsible, working taxpayer father, I think we're able to recognize which is the desired circumstance.

Conclusion

After thirty years of failed federal welfare policies, which have almost irreparably damaged the existence of the two-parent household unit, and created visible scars of inter-generational dependency, domestic and gang violence and child neglect, it is time for Congress to step forward with bold, compassionate approach that reflects the experience and demonstrated capability of indigenous, African-American service providers in our low-income communities.

The Congress has already demonstrated its bold leadership in enacting the 1996 landmark welfare reform bill. Fathers Count recognizes the critical next step in restoring the hearts of fathers to their children and their families by bolstering stable marriages with economic independence in order to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty in this nation.



NEWS FROM

Senator John Breaux

LOUISIANA



 Contact: Bette Phelan, Liz Golden (202) 224-4623

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 25, 2000

BREAUX USES SENATE HEARING TO STRESS FAMILIES NEED FATHERS

WASHINGTON (July 25) – Sen. John Breaux (D-La.) said at a Senate hearing today that we must recognize the challenges posed by fatherlessness to our nation's children, families and communities. He stressed that the number of kids living in households without fathers has tripled in the past 40 years, now totaling 17 million.

"These kids are much more likely to live in poverty, commit crime, become pregnant as teenagers and participate in socially deviant behavior than their peers with both parents at home," said Sen. Breaux, ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy. "The Responsible Fatherhood Act would strengthen fragile families and promote stronger connections among fathers and their children. This legislation is one way we can encourage our young fathers to get more involved in their children's lives."

Senator Breaux is an original co-sponsor of the Responsible Fatherhood Act, S.1364, which gives states and local communities flexibility to develop programs that encourage responsible parenting, and stem the tide of fatherless families.

The bipartisan legislation focuses on two solutions:

- * First, the bill would create a block grant program, to expand responsible fatherhood promotion programs at the state and local levels. The grants would be funded through state and local governments, and civic, charitable, non-profit and religious organizations.
- * Second, the bill would create a public awareness campaign about the responsibilities of fatherhood, to improve the attitudes about the responsibilities of parenting a child, particularly among young fathers.

The Senate hearing also focused on the Children First Child Support Reform Act, S.1036, which Sen. Breaux cosponsored to strengthen state and local welfare and child support laws. Currently, in Louisiana, there are 14,278 welfare cases that should be receiving child support payments but payments, are collected from only 8,057 of those welfare cases.

"This legislation will provide more resources to Louisiana's children and families by encouraging more parents to live up to their child support obligations," said Sen. Breaux. "The Children First Child Support Reform Act puts our children first by not only encouraging collection of more child support money but also encouraging parents to stay more active in their children's daily lives."



Hearing on "Fatherhood Initiatives"
Committee on Finance
Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy
July 25, 2000-SD-215-2:00 P.M.
Statement of Sen. James M. Jeffords

I would first like to thank Chairman Roth and Chairman Nickles for holding this hearing today. I am pleased that we have the opportunity to hear from such a distinguished group of panelists on the subject of fatherhood. I also would like to thank Senators Bayh, Domenici, and Kohl for being here today. I appreciate their work to promote and support responsible fatherhood.

I agree with the statement of my colleague, Senator Bayh, that the lack of fathers' involvement in their children's lives may be "the greatest single social problem in America" today. According to the National Fatherhood Initiative, nearly 25 million children, or 36 percent of all children in the United States, live away from their biological father. Even worse, 40 percent of these children have not seen their fathers in the past year. In my own state of Vermont, over 16% of families do not have a father in the home, and nearly a quarter of all babies are born out of wedlock.

These statistics become even more striking in light of the most recent social science research in this area. Research on fatherhood has consistently shown that children who are raised in single-parent families fare worse than those raised in two-parent families on a variety of social indicators. For example:

- The poverty rate of children in single-parent families is over 45 percent, as compared to 10 percent for children in two-parent households.
- The best predictor of violent crime in a community is not the poverty rate or the level of educational attainment--rather, it is the percentage of households in which the father is absent.
- Children with involved fathers score higher on basic learning skills tests, have higher self-esteem, and show fewer signs of depression than children without fathers in their lives.
- Children who live without contact with their fathers are more than twice as likely to drop out of school or abuse alcohol and drugs than children who grow up with both parents in the household.

Of course, all of this does not mean that children raised in single-parent homes can not grow into happy, successful adults. Millions of single parents around the country are doing a courageous job in raising, supporting, and nurturing their families. I have worked hard to expand programs such as the Child Care and Development Block Grant and the Social Services Block Grant to help these families afford child care and other important services.

However, we know in our hearts, and the research has proven, that two parents are better than one. And while government can not force two parents to love one another, it can pass policies that encourage fathers to fulfill their financial and emotional commitments to their children.

I feel that the federal government must make a true commitment to reversing the rise of absent fathers in this country. That is why I am proud to be a co-sponsor of S.1364, the "Responsible Fatherhood Act of 2000". Sponsored by Senators Bayh and Domenici, this bill takes a clear step in the right direction by increasing public awareness of the importance of marriage and fatherhood and removing existing federal regulations that serve as barriers to responsible parenting and fatherhood.

To truly promote responsible fatherhood, a bill must focus not only on the economic role a father plays in his child's life, but also on his unique role as an emotional caregiver and a mentor. The "Responsible Fatherhood Act of 2000" does the former by allowing states and localities to use their Welfare-to-Work grant funds to serve a broader range of low-income fathers, while also reestablishing the federal government as a partner to states that choose to pass through a portion of the child support paid to TANF families directly to the family. In addition, the bill makes block grants available to state and local governments and community groups to help ensure that fathers do not shirk their emotional responsibilities.

One positive effect of welfare reform is that many states are coming up with innovative approaches. The block grant approach of the Bayh/Domenici bill will allow states the flexibility to continue their efforts on behalf of responsible fatherhood. Last month, for example, a statewide conference in Vermont brought researchers, policymakers, and fathers together to examine the subject of non-custodial fathers. As a direct result of the conference, Vermont's Departments of Social Welfare, Employment and Training, and Social and Rehabilitative Services will soon be jointly publishing a handbook for non-custodial fathers.

Like many other states, Vermont is moving forward in the area of fatherhood, to the mutual benefit of our state's children and their non-custodial fathers. We should continue to encourage these efforts. I am proud to say that our state already has multiple programs and policies in place that promote fathers' roles in their children's lives. Vermont's welfare program provides case management to fathers to help them become more involved in their children's lives. The state provides parent education to both custodial and non-custodial fathers through father-child playgroups and other comprehensive services.

Several programs have also been instituted in Vermont to help fathers provide for their children financially. The state's aggressive in-hospital paternity establishment effort has resulted in a rate that is nearly 30 percent above the national rate. Further, Vermont voluntarily passes through and disregards the first \$50 of child support funds collected on behalf to children receiving welfare directly to the family.

Despite all of the successes of these programs in Vermont and of similar programs around the country, we must do more in the area of fatherhood. My hope is that the Congress will work to pass the "Responsible Fatherhood Act of 2000". In doing so, we will take a tremendous step towards encouraging and helping fathers to take an active role in their children's lives.



National Center for
Strategic Nonprofit
Planning and
Community Leadership

Written Testimony for the hearing on

Fatherhood Initiatives

of

Dr. Jeffery M. Johnson

President and CEO

National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and

Community Leadership (NPCL)

before the

Senate Finance Subcommittee on

Social Security and Family Policy

July 25, 2000

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Strengthening Organizations to Serve People and Communities for the Future

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Good Afternoon. I want to thank Chairman Nickles, Senator Breaux and other members of the United States Senate Finance Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy for this opportunity to testify on current fatherhood initiatives. I am Jeffery M. Johnson, President and CEO of NPCL, the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership, a national nonprofit intermediary organization dedicated to *"Strengthening Organizations to Serve People and Communities for the Future."* I believe these hearings are a demonstration of your insight into what I believe is one of the root causes of many of our sociological dysfunctions today-- the rampant epidemic of fatherlessness-- across the nation. These hearings are a recognition that for far too long we have neglected the aspect of fatherhood in American family social policy; and I commend you for your insight and caring during this hectic legislative session.

If you are successful in passing S.1364, sponsored by Senators Bayh and Domenici, or some similar responsible fatherhood bill that squarely addresses the new demographic of the welfare system — **fragile families** — it will be an important first step in providing much needed general support not only to the fathers who need strengthening; but to their families, and most importantly their children. A **fragile family**, any of the families consisting of two, low-skilled biological parents and their child(ren), represents 23 % of the children living in poverty.¹ Provisions of the pending fatherhood bills recognize the importance of this new demographic phenomenon and its impact on our social service delivery system. S.1364 would allow, through its grants portion, support to local programs serving these fragile families. Increased public awareness, combined with specific education regarding the benefits of lasting and stable relationships, and community involvement are important components in the promotion of fatherhood and related issues. Welfare recipients, working poor custodial and non-custodial parents, married or never married, can all benefit from this approach. Such a bill would also have implications for the future success of TANF, elevated child support collections as well as welfare-to-work initiatives.

¹The National Survey of America's Families is a large, nationally representative survey of the non-elderly population (under 65 years of age) conducted in 1997 for the Urban Institute.

I have more than 20 years of experience working with fathers and families as well as my own personal experience on which to base my testimony. I had the wonderful opportunity of being reared in a family with two loving parents for 12 years. Unfortunately, my father died at the age of 39 leaving behind a widow and ten children. Despite the positive example set by my mother, life was a struggle. In those days she, like tens of thousands of single parents in this country today, struggled to make ends meet. Each of my brothers and sisters also faced their own unique challenges related to having only our mother to raise us.

I also experienced what some researchers call "father hunger." I yearned for my dad. I have often thought about and been grateful for the lessons he taught me regarding work, responsibility and parenting. I know first hand the importance of fathers in families and I bring that knowledge to my work each day. The mission of NPCL is to enhance the capacity of community-based organizations to address identified local needs, primarily through family and neighborhood empowerment. NPCL is the nation's largest intermediary organization dedicated to the strengthening of fragile families. The NPCL staff of experts represent 300 years of combined experience in working with fathers, poor families, and community-based organizations. Simply put, NPCL offers its expertise to help communities and families help themselves. And as we know strong families are critical to the health, economic, emotional and developmental well-being of children.

NPCL's primary project is **Partners for Fragile Families Site Demonstration Project (PFF)** the first comprehensive national initiative designed to learn how best to 1) facilitate the long-term involvement of poor fathers in the lives of their children; and, 2) increase young fathers' earnings potential to the level of a family sustaining wage. PFF is the putative child of best practices culled from over forty years of social policy research and experimentation in this area. A collaborative effort funded by grants from NPCL and operated in ten test cities under a recently approved U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services 1115 waiver, PFF brings together public and private groups, grassroots community-based organizations, federal and state child support enforcement agencies, private employers and others to help men take financial, emotional and legal responsibility for their children.

PFF is the practicum, the field laboratory experiment, for the **Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative (SFFI)**. That initiative is led by the Ford Foundation, in cooperation with Charles Stewart Mott, Annie E. Casey, William and Flora Hewlett, foundations along with the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, and the U.S. Department of Labor to develop a comprehensive infrastructure to support fragile families. SFFI was launched to encourage research, policy, practice, dialog, and comprehensive public education designed to support a service delivery system that would enable fathers and mothers to meet their responsibility to their children. In our role as initiative administrator for SFFI, NPCL was instrumental in bringing together the Morehouse Conference on African American Fathers. The conference itself, and the subsequent publication *"Turning the Corner on Father Absence in Black America"* were all part of the comprehensive public education and communication plan for the initiative.

SFFI research shows that most young fathers are highly involved with their children and their children's mother at the birth of the child and during the early childhood years. Therefore, the image of mothers raising their children born outside of marriage by themselves is not totally accurate. According to chart 1,² 30 percent of children under the age of two who are born outside of marriage live with both of their biological parents. Another 32 percent live with their mothers and see their fathers at least once a week. Thus, according to the survey, the majority of young poor children born outside of marriage have highly involved fathers. Chart 2³ shows that just over a quarter of poor children spend their first two years in a fragile family, but as children get older, this family type declines. For poor children under the age of two, 38 percent of them live with their two natural, married parents; 27 percent live in a fragile family; 29 percent live with their mother and their father is not highly involved; and 5 percent live in other arrangements. By the time poor children are in their teens, however, only 5 percent of them live in a fragile family; 59 percent live with their mother and their dad is not highly involved. Thus, most poor children end up in a single mother family with an uninvolved father, but when poor children are young, both parents are more likely than not to be involved. Consequently, SFFI's designers realized that the next round of

² Ibid. (See Attachment 1)

³ Ibid. (See Attachment 2)

welfare reform must achieve two feasible, but difficult, objectives: 1) collect significant amounts of child support from some of the most disadvantaged fathers in America, and 2) devise a means of inducing these fathers to enter into stable relationships, including marriage, with the mothers of their children.

PFF was designed to test early research findings while simultaneously implementing identified best practices. PFF's designers believe that all children and their families are entitled to live in a safe and healthy environment. Programs devoted to serving young, low-income, never married fathers must develop strategies for dealing with the issue of domestic violence whenever it is present. To that end, two of the PFF sites are currently involved in the development of a collaborative program with domestic violence experts to effectively serve this population. We believe that the program strategies developed in this collaboration will not only provide a model for other PFF sites, but provide a blueprint for other service providers engaged in the work of responsible fatherhood.

The philosophy behind PFF rests in the overall mission of NPCL: to build communities — especially urban, and low-income rural areas — through family and neighborhood empowerment. PFF is a massive public/private coalition of experts and front-line providers designed to coordinate targeted funds for peer support, conflict management, value clarification, management of sexuality, health education, employment and training, and other services that produce sustained connections between fathers and their families. The federal government cannot and should not be expected to solve these problems alone. Nor should private and community-based groups be expected to address these issues without government support. The operative idea here is a partnership that leverages resources in a broad working coalition toward the shared goal of strong, independent families where children are well-cared for by both mother *and* father. Our guiding principle is that fathers have value to children even when fathers do not have money.

"Dead-broke dads," not "deadbeat dads," is the accurate description of PFF fathers. They are men who would qualify for food stamps themselves, men who statistically look like the welfare mothers who are the primary target of TANF. "Dead-broke dads" *cannot* pay any meaningful amount of child support but *would* if they were able. "Deadbeat dads," by contrast, *can* pay child support but *will not*.

Deadbeat dads were half of a mature, divorced or separated couple. Their relationship began, they married, then the relationship ended when one spouse decided it was over. Public policy in these instances requires — and rightfully so — that the non-custodial parents, usually the father, provides adequately for the children. The mother and the children were thereby assured that they would avoid poverty, which was frequently the result when the father withdrew his commonly, higher income. Public policy occasionally also requires some sort of mediation process to address conflict between the parents. With this kind of systemic support, the mother could get back on her feet, find her way back into the labor market, perhaps remarry and reestablish a middle class lifestyle. Public policy thus helped families bring their union to an amicable end and recover their economic status in the community.

This is not the situation among fragile families. Young, low-skilled, unmarried, poor parents have their children before they are mature enough to understand and manage a committed relationship and before they recognize the implications of unmarried, unprotected sex and childbearing. Forty-five percent of fragile families are white, 37 percent are black, and they often come from families that have suffered generations of poverty. "Dead-broke dads" are often young, had their first child before finishing high school or acquiring much work experience. They are in all practical respects, unemployable. These are also characteristics of long-term welfare recipients whose exit from dependency is limited because these deficiencies make them poor candidates for work or marriage. And like welfare mothers, these men require some systemic intervention and support in order to become self-sufficient and able to function as responsible parents.

The child support system is one of the most significant obstacles these fathers face because this system often thwarts low-income fathers' efforts to provide for their children and to repair their relationships with their child(ren)'s mothers. When money paid to the child support system is not distributed to the custodial parent, it is difficult for low-income fathers to find any rationale for continuing to pay that support. Therefore, the PFF model requires that the state child support agency be a full partner in the collaboration. Responsible fatherhood programs must partner with the child support system to ensure that it does not unintentionally pose additional barriers to family formation.

Partners for Fragile Families addresses a range of related issues including systemic policy change and chronic unemployment. Community-based organizations help these men establish legal paternity, learn their legal rights and responsibilities and negotiate the formal child support system. Child support enforcement agencies in turn, can modify child support orders to give fathers time to secure training and a job then gradually increase the order to match the father's ability to pay. Additionally, PFF builds workforce development into the program. All PFF grantees are required to institute or provide access to intensive career and personal development skills training in preparation for placement in family-sustaining, wage-growth jobs. PFF employment and training specialists have the knowledge, experience, and desire to work with low-skilled fathers as well as links them to jobs made available by the private sector.

I am sure that you have heard about Parents Fair Share. The primary objective of Parents Fair Share was to determine whether the provision of limited employment and training services would help low-income fathers become better child support payers. It was not a comprehensive life competencies development program like Partners for Fragile Families. All PFF grantees are required to use the *Fatherhood Development Curriculum*, coauthored by Pamela Wilson and myself, to teach values, manhood, parental accountability, anger management, health, sexuality and pregnancy prevention, conflict resolution and self-sufficiency. These lessons are emphasized by the teacher-practitioner and by a peer support group. Thus, other young men who have successfully become responsible parents set the example and provide leadership for those trying to get there. We also emphasize what we call team, T-E-A-M parenting, meaning that parents work together for the benefit of their children regardless of their marital status. And let me address the question of marriage here by stating that we support it. However, the crucial question for us is not *whether* but *when*.

A young father without a job or prospects may be a poor candidate for marriage, but that does not mean he abdicates his role as "daddy." Whether or not the child's parents are married, the child needs food, clothes, care, love and two supportive, nurturing parents. After he becomes self-supporting and an integral part of his child(ren)'s lives, repairs or more fully develops the relationship with the mother of his child(ren); hopefully, marriage is a result, if that is something the couple seeks for themselves.

Parents Fair Share was the third generation of social welfare demonstrations - focused on low-income fathers. Partners for Fragile Families builds on the lessons learned from Parents Fair Share as well as the work that has gone before in order to provide these young fathers and their families a real opportunity to enter the mainstream. We have designed a program that does not simply react to the problems low-income fathers face but one that aggressively seeks to initiate change based on the culmination of best practices to date.

After one year, preliminary findings from PFF's process analysis are beginning to emerge. First, implementing new approaches, as required by this legislation, to work with poor fathers and their fragile families is hard work. Getting child support enforcement agencies, TANF, and workforce development to think differently about fathers and partnering with community-based organizations to help them get the services they need is difficult. These partnerships are hindered by a number of factors including mistrust, bureaucracy, and agency/organizational culture. It should be noted that it took one full year to get the government to approve the 1115 waiver to start PFF. This delay was in part due to the inertia of getting the federal system to move beyond its traditional ways of dealing with fathers and to embrace the PFF goal of becoming more father friendly. This inertia is now manifesting itself at the state and local level.

Another interesting finding is that many of the child support enforcement agencies participating in PFF are modifying staffing patterns by adding new community-liaison positions. This change appears to have brought concreteness to the Personal Responsibility, Work, Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) requirement for community outreach. Both these findings are examples of the systems reform in child support that PFF seeks to achieve on behalf poor fathers and their fragile families.

Despite changes in child support, community-based organizations have yet to identify effective ways to recruit large numbers of young fathers that meet the PFF profile and get them to voluntarily enroll in local PFF projects. These fathers operate underground and have avoided establishing legal paternity for fear of going to jail for not paying child support. The PFF father differs from traditional fathers served by child support in that they are younger, do not have child support orders, and, as a consequence, have yet to accumulate significant arrearages. Most fatherhood programs

now in existence get their fathers from child support referrals or from the court system. Working with young fathers (ages 16-25 years of age) who have yet to receive a child support order is a new innovation being tested in the ten PFF sites. Our success at getting these young fathers jobs, manage their relationship with the mother of their children, and receiving child support orders based on their ability to pay will hopefully insure their long term involvement in the lives of their children. NPCL staff is working with PFF-CBO partners on creative recruitment approaches including getting leads from the mothers who are enrolled in Early Head Start, Head Start and alternative programs serving pregnant moms. This approach is in alignment with SFFI researchers who have found that over 60 percent of these young couples are romantically involved at the time of the birth of the child.

The experience gained and the lessons learned in PFF has further enhanced NPCL's capacity to work with fatherhood program practitioners. Over the past five years NPCL has trained almost 10,000 fatherhood practitioners. Our PFF sites enjoy the most comprehensive capacity building delivery strategy ever seen in the fatherhood field.

The PFF program is new, but it has an excellent prognosis. Anecdotal reports suggest that young fathers are indeed becoming responsible workers, adept at mediating the relationship between themselves and the mothers of their children and are becoming good parents. In addition, preliminary research data from the Access Support and Advancement Partnership (ASAP), an intensive job training program, administered by STRIVE, Inc., a PFF community-based partner in Harlem, NY, shows that PFF grantees are succeeding in training and job placement with a difficult population. Of 567 participants enrolled in the Boston and New York, ASAP, a total of 308 were placed in jobs after two years. The average salary of ASAP graduates in Boston was \$22,308 and \$20,301 in New York. In 1990, 61 percent of dead-broke dads had incomes below the poverty level (about \$6800) and 86 percent had personal incomes below the poverty level for a family of four (about \$13,000).

As you know, the implementation of welfare reform gave states immense flexibility to implement various program designs through "state options." States are free, within the broadest limits ever provided, to set their own eligibility criteria for welfare programs. States can use their funding "to encourage the formation of two parent

households." The recent clarification of TANF regulations made it explicit that services can be provided to low-income non-custodial parents, usually fathers, without negatively impacting the benefits of the custodial parent. Some states had already begun to move in this direction, and we believe that other states will follow these pioneering efforts.

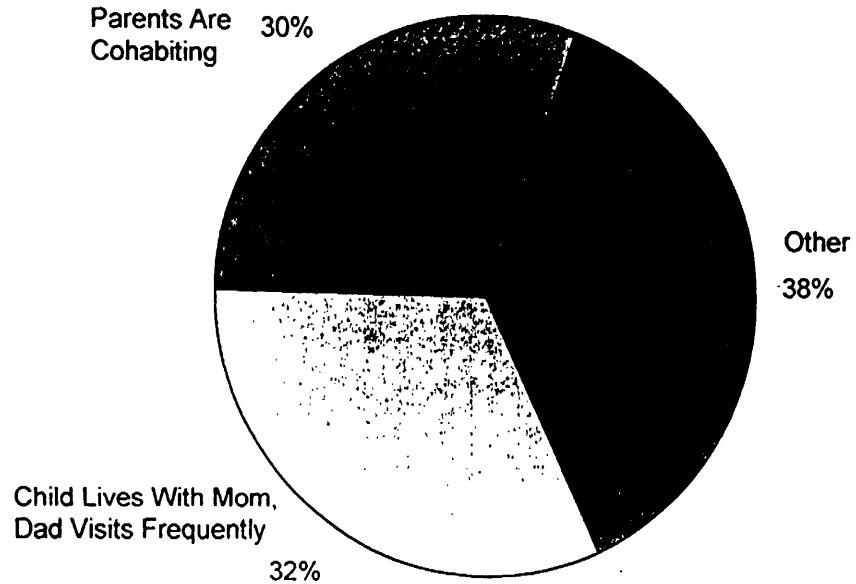
Now more than ever, we must continue to look for ways to invest in poor and working poor families. That is especially the case when we can design programs that focus on strengthening the role of fathers and mothers in supporting children thereby removing the necessity of public support. At this time of unprecedented economic expansion, policymakers ought to devote resources to strategies that support these families by focusing on the contributions that both parents can make. Besides insuring the effective transfer of income, such strategies must include obtaining the emotional and developmental contributions that both parents can make. To achieve this objective there should be a targeted public funding stream established that provides services to fathers as an integral part of the income and family support delivery system.

We cannot over-emphasize the significance of federal legislation emphasizing the importance of fatherhood and the role that fathers must play in their families and communities. Passage of such legislation would be a clear signal that fathers are indeed important to families and should be acknowledged for their unique contribution to the well being of children. Enabling fathers as well as mothers to become a meaningful positive force in the lives of their children is a goal that every American can support. The seeds of change have been cultivated by a few foundations and in a few states. It is now time for the federal government to play a more significant role in the development and institutionalization of these programs. By doing so, the federal government could ensure the sustainability of programs to support poor fathers and the inclusion of the role of fathers as a permanent fixture of our social service delivery program.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this afternoon.

CHART 1

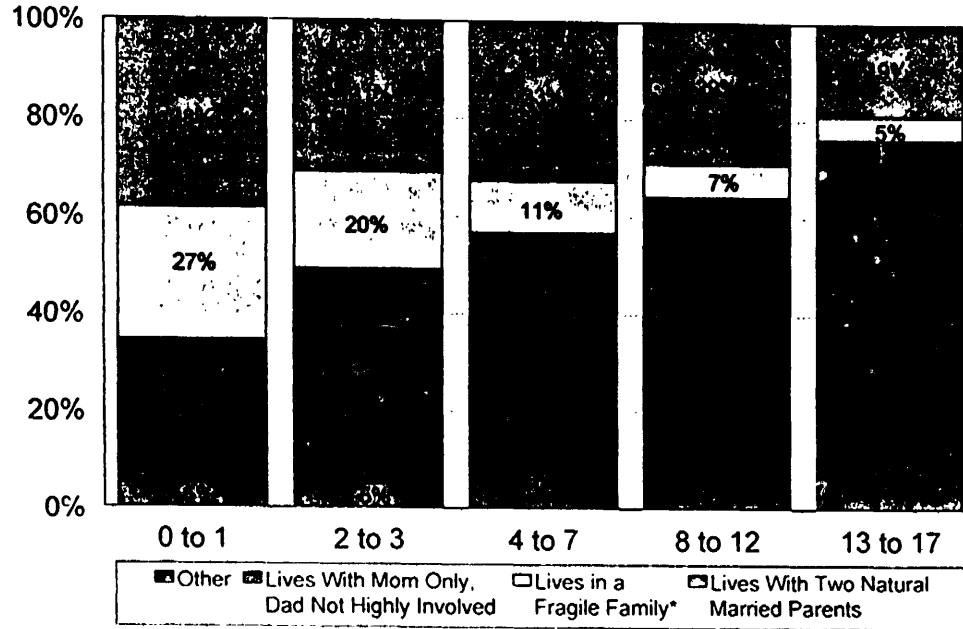
Father Involvement Among Children Born Outside of Marriage Under the Age of Two



Source: National Survey of America's Families, 1997

CHART 2

Family Types Among Poor Children By Child's Age



* Children Living in Fragile Families Are Born Outside of Marriage and Live With Both of Their Natural Parents or Live With Their Mom and Have a Father Who Visits Frequently.

Source: National Survey of America's Families, 1997

News from

HERB KOHL

United States Senator
Democrat of Wisconsin

330 Hart Senate Office Building • Washington, D.C. 20510 • (202) 224- 5653

Statement of Senator Herb Kohl
Fatherhood Initiatives Hearing
Senate Finance Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy
July 25, 2000

Chairman Nickles, Senator Breaux, and other members of the Subcommittee, thank you for welcoming me with Senators Domenici and Bayh to join in this discussion of fatherhood initiatives.

My input today concerns efforts to increase child support collections and to increase the support dollars that are delivered directly – or passed-through – to families involved in the public system. To me, there is no stronger indication that we are facing a fatherhood crisis, than the overwhelming evidence that we are facing a child support crisis.

In Fiscal Year 1998, the public system collected child support payments for only **23 percent** of its caseload. This means that our nation's children are owed roughly \$47 billion in over-due child support. Though every year we collect more, it is clear that some fathers are not paying what they should, and too many children still lack the support they need and deserve.

While we can agree that the level of over-due child support is unacceptable, we also know that poor collection rates don't tell a simple story. There are many reasons why non-custodial parents may not be paying support for their children. Some are not able to pay because they don't have jobs or have fallen on hard times. Others may not pay because they are unfairly prevented from spending time with their children.

But other fathers don't pay because the public system actually discourages them from paying. As you may know, under the current system, nearly \$2 billion in child support is retained every year as repayment for public assistance, rather than delivered to the children to whom it is owed. This policy has existed since 1975 when we designed the public child support system to recover the costs of welfare assistance. Once collected, those support dollars are split between the state and Federal governments as reimbursement for welfare costs.

Since the money doesn't benefit their kids, fathers are either discouraged from paying support all together or at least discouraged from paying through the formal system. And on the other side of the equation, mothers have no incentive to push for payment since the support doesn't go to them.

more

My "Children First Child Support Reform Act" attempts to address this problem. The legislation creates new incentives for states to let families working their way off -- or just off -- public assistance, keep their own child support payments. Under my bill, if a state gives the child support it helps collect to the family, that state can credit the payment as spending on welfare. And if states give most of the support to the family without reducing the family's public assistance, that state will no longer have to repay the Federal government its share of the support payment. In other words, we provide states with more incentives and options, not mandates, to do the right thing and make child support payments truly meaningful for families.

In 1997, we worked for a waiver to allow my home state of Wisconsin to adopt this policy -- and they have with great success. Wisconsin has found that when child support payments are delivered to families, fathers are more apt to pay, and to pay more. In addition, Wisconsin has found that, overall, this policy does not increase government costs. That makes sense because "passing through" support payments to families means they have more of their own resources, and are less apt to depend on public help for food, transportation or child care.

We know that creating the right incentives for fathers to pay support and increasing collections has long-term benefits. People who can count on child support are more likely to stay in jobs and stay off public assistance.

Delivering or passing through child support directly to families would simplify the job for states as well. The states currently devote 17 percent of what they spend to run the entire child support program -- \$400 million a year -- on distributing collections. This has created an administrative nightmare. Right now, the states divvy up child support dollars into as many as 9 pots. Under my proposal, states would have greater freedom to adopt a straightforward policy of collecting child support and delivering it to families, without costly and burdensome regulations.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, moving towards a simpler child support system, that puts greater emphasis on getting funds to families is the right and most fair approach -- for fathers, for children and for all of us interested in making the program work. Within the broad context of fatherhood initiatives, I sincerely urge you not to overlook the importance of child support reform and of allowing fathers to support their children directly. I'm pleased to note the House Ways and Means Committee is moving forward on a comprehensive package to do just that.

Thank you again for including me in this discussion, and I look forward to working with you to promote responsible, involved fathers and healthy, happy children.

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2000

HELP DELIVER CHILD SUPPORT TO FAMILIES

Dear Colleague:

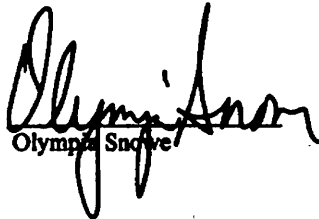
We are writing to share with you what the experts are saying about *S. 1036, the Children First Child Support Reform Act*, legislation to increase child support collections and reduce administrative burdens on the states. S. 1036 provides the states with options to passthrough, or deliver child support directly, to families moving from welfare to work.

Our legislation is supported by children's advocates and fatherhood groups alike, including the National Women's Law Center, the Association for Children for Enforcement of Support (ACES); and the Center for Fathers, Families and Public Policy. At its February 2000 meeting, the National Governor's Association (NGA) also approved policy acknowledging that *"In an effort to increase the effectiveness of the child support program and to improve families' self-sufficiency, Governors are interested in considering change within the child support financing structure, such as an option for greater passthrough."*

Under current law, over \$2 billion in child support is *not* distributed to the children to whom it is owed every year. Instead, it is retained as repayment for public assistance. This policy discourages non-custodial parents from paying support and discourages custodial parents from working to secure increased payments. Ultimately, it robs children of the resources they so desperately need to learn and grow, and diverts critical state resources away from the more important program goals of establishing and enforcing child support orders.

Please join our efforts to deliver more child support resources to families and make the system less burdensome on the states. If you have questions or wish to co-sponsor, please contact Eileen Hattan Lynch with Senator Kohl at 4-1888 or Jennifer Griffith with Senator Snowe at 4-8665. Thank you.

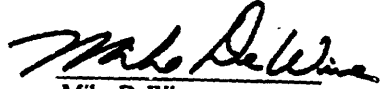
Sincerely,


Herb Kohl
Olympia Snowe

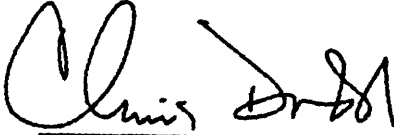
Page 2
March 16, 2000



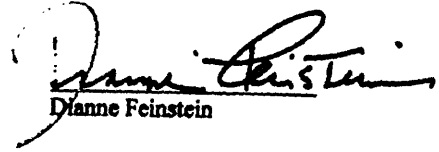
John Rockefeller, IV



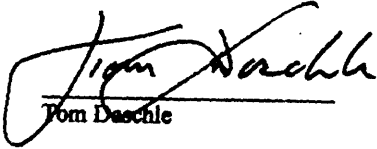
Mike DeWine



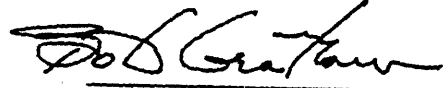
Chris Dodd



Dianne Feinstein



Tom Daschle



Bob Graham



Chuck Grassley

Giving support directly to family makes sense

Q I had the chance to read your column in the Family Times concerning the Fathers Count legislation and appreciate your insight on the need to promote responsible fatherhood. Your discussion of what Congress can and should do to help sparked some questions I want to direct to your attention.

As you know, I worked with my home state of Wisconsin on the issue of child-support "pass-through" policy, or whether the child support collected goes to the state or to the families. I believe we could improve the public child support system by delivering the payments directly to the families for which they are intended rather than to the government. I am currently sponsoring the Child First Child Support Reform Act, bipartisan legislation to provide states with incentives to expand these types of policies.

I would appreciate your thoughts on this subject. For example, what message is the public system sending to parents and children by retaining child support payments rather than delivering those payments to the children? Do you think this policy has an impact upon a non-custodial parent's willingness to pay support, or on the custodial parent's willingness to find work? I look forward to reading your views.

— Sen. Herb Kohl
Wisconsin Democrat

A: It's not every day I receive a letter to my column from a U.S. senator. So I must admit, I put this letter on the top of the pile.

Mr. Kohl is referring to a child-support policy that goes back some 40 years. In 1950, Congress grew increasingly concerned that out-of-work fathers were purposely abandoning their children to get their families onto cash welfare, which paid a higher benefit than unemployment insurance.

The rather obvious way to eliminate this perverse incentive for family breakup would have been to equalize the value of cash welfare and unemployment insurance benefits. But that is not what Congress did.

Instead, in 1950 Congress passed something



Fatherly advice

called the Notice to Law Enforcement Officials, or NOLEO, giving local law enforcement officials the power to make an absent father reimburse the state for the cost of providing cash welfare to the family he had abandoned. The law was designed to

discourage fathers from purposely abandoning their families. Since, the reasoning went, ultimately he would be repaying the cost of the cash welfare his family received anyway.

Things didn't exactly work out the way the Congress had hoped. Rather than discouraging father abandonment, what this well-intentioned law actually did was encourage fathers to disappear. After all, you can't get money from a father you can't find.

Thus, under the current system, an unhealthy collusion can exist between the mother and the father in which the absentee father provides the family with

cash under the table in exchange for the mother denying knowledge of his whereabouts. The problem is this informal support is highly unreliable. And, of course, when the father is in hiding, it's hard to be an involved dad.

If that's what we really want is not just the father's money, but his positive involvement in his children's lives, the current system makes no sense. Some, such as Mr. Kohl, argue that a better idea is to allow at least a portion of the non-custodial parent's child support payments to be "passed through" directly to the family, rather than assigning it to the state.

There are several advantages to this proposal. First, passing child support through to the family sends the message that child support is really about, well, child support — not government support.

Second, as the non-custodial father sees at least a portion of his child support obligation going directly to his children, he may be more likely to see his children regularly. To be cross about it, if you're going to pay for the car, you might as well take it out for a drive once in a while.

Third, passing through child support directly to the family should encourage work on the part of the non-custodial father since there would be a more direct link between his work effort and the well-being of his children — a link that is less clear when his child-support check is going to a government office.

Care would have to be taken,

however, to ensure that such a policy change did not inadvertently create a disincentive for the custodial parent to go to work. If too much money is passed through to the family without a concomitant decline in the value of cash welfare, it could make going to work a less attractive option for the custodial parent.

But it is important to keep in mind that eligibility for cash welfare is now limited to five years. So eventually the custodial parent would have to go to work anyway. In addition, the amount of child support passed through to the family could be limited to, say, the first \$75 per month. It's hard to imagine an extra \$75 a month would mean the difference between finding work attractive or unattractive.

In fact, passing a portion of child support through to the family could result in increased, not decreased, work effort on the part of the custodial parent. That's because, unlike cash welfare, the child-support payments would continue even after the custodial parent goes to work.

My bottom line is this: The current child support system, well intentioned though it may be, has not helped stem the tide of absent fathers. In fact, in some ways it may have made things even worse. If we want men to be fathers to their children and not simply a revenue source for government, perhaps it is time to try something else. Mr. Kohl's pass-through idea seems like a good place to start.

Dr. Wade F. Horn is a clinical child psychologist, president of the National Fatherhood Initiative and co-author of several books on parenting. Send your questions about dads, children and fatherhood to the National Fatherhood Initiative, 101 Lake Forest Blvd., Suite 368, Gaithersburg, Md. 20877, or send e-mail to NFI1995@aol.com.



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*All names listed for identification
 purposes only

March 6, 2000

Senator Herbert Kohl
 330 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kohl:

We write to express our strong support for S. 1036, the Children First Child Support Reform Act. For over 20 years, the Center has worked to improve the child support enforcement system because child support makes a critical difference for children and the single parents, mostly mothers, who care for them.

The Act recognizes that child support should be, first, for children, which unfortunately it is not for some of our poorest children. In a majority of states, children in families receiving public assistance do not receive any of the child support paid on their behalf; states retain the payments to reimburse themselves and the federal government for the public assistance costs. S. 1036 provides incentives for states to pass through child support to families and disregard this support in calculating eligibility for public benefits, making the child support program more supportive of poor parents' efforts to provide for their children. Both parents are frustrated when child support is collected from the (often low-income) noncustodial parents of children receiving public assistance but these payments do not benefit their children directly. Broader adoption of disregard policies would enable these noncustodial parents to make a real difference in their children's lives, and encourage greater cooperation with the formal child support system.

S. 1036's approach would provide additional benefits to families. Custodial parents would know how much child support the noncustodial parent is paying and its potential as an earnings supplement after the family leaves welfare. If states also set up systems to pay child support directly to the family, families leaving welfare would be more likely to receive the child support due them promptly. Although families are entitled to receive current support as soon as they leave welfare, as a practical matter such payments may be delayed for months as the child support and welfare agencies exchange information and try to redirect payments.

In addition, the approach taken in S. 1036 should work for states. Many states want to implement policies to pass through and disregard at least some support to families to promote their welfare reform goals but have been deterred from implementing such policies for administrative and financial reasons. S. 1036 should address these concerns. First, S. 1036 would simplify the complex rules for distributing child support collections created by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. Second, S. 1036 allows states to claim any passed-through amounts as welfare expenditure for purposes of meeting the TANF maintenance of effort requirements. Also, states that disregard at least 50 percent of the passed-through child support would not have to calculate and pay the federal share of such collections.

We hope that Congress will support this important effort to put children first in child support reform.

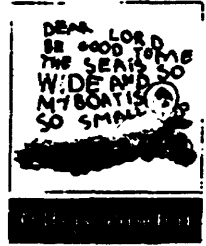
Sincerely,

Nancy Duff Campbell
 Nancy Duff Campbell
 Co-President

Joan Entmacher
 Joan Entmacher
 Vice President and Director of Family Economic Security

With the law on your side, great things are possible.

11 Dupont Circle • Suite 800 • Washington, DC 20036 • 202.588.5180 • 202.588.5185 Fax



June 30, 1999

The Honorable Herbert H. Kohl
 Hart Senate Office Building
 Room 330
 United States Senate
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kohl:

Thank you for the leadership role you are taking on child support pass-through and disregard policy. The Children's Defense Fund supports S. 1036, the Children First Child Support Reform Act of 1999, your legislation to give states the option to pass through and disregard child support collected on behalf of children receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). We believe that it is important that states have at least this option. Like you, we believe such a policy is important for a number of reasons. By letting custodial parents know how much child support they can depend on, they are better able to budget family finances once they leave welfare. By letting children benefit from child support, a disregard improves their financial well being. It also gives them an important signal: the non-custodial parent cares about them, and is helping to provide for their support. By letting non-custodial parents help their children (instead of simply reimbursing the state for welfare payments), a disregard also gives non-custodial parents an incentive to pay and an important link with their children.

We are pleased that your approach recognizes the importance of protections so that a pass-through of child support does not disadvantage families. If child support goes down and welfare payments are not adjusted promptly, children are hurt. We appreciate your sensitivity to the importance of protections so that this does not happen. We look forward to working with you and your staff on this issue.

Very truly yours,

Deborah Weinstein
 Director, Family Income Division

25 E Street NW
 Washington, DC 20001
 Telephone 202 628 8787
 Fax 202 662 3510
 E-mail
 cdinfo@childrendefense.org
 Internet

HERBERT KOHL
WISCONSIN

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

CHILDREN FIRST CHILD SUPPORT REFORM

Over \$45 billion in child support is owed to needy children across the country. To address this crisis, Senator Kohl is sponsoring bipartisan legislation, **S. 1036, The Children First Child Support Reform Act**, to increase child support collections and make the public child support system fairer and better for the families it is designed to serve and simpler for the states to administer. It has the support of children's advocates and fatherhood groups alike.

The Kohl bill would encourage more states to deliver child support resources directly to families, helping those families make their way off of welfare and remain self-sufficient. Under the current system, over \$2 billion in child support resources are not delivered to families every year, but remain with the state as repayment for welfare assistance. This policy discourages non-custodial parents from paying support and discourages custodial payments from working to secure increased payments. Ultimately, it robs children of the resources they desperately need to learn and grow.

Senator Kohl's legislation will benefit mothers, fathers and their children by providing incentives for the states to let families keep more of their own child support resources. It will also help reduce administrative burdens on the states so that more program resources can be focused on the more important goals of establishing and enforcing child support orders.

S. 1036, the Children First Child Support Reform Act:

- **Expands Passthrough:** IF states passthrough, or let families keep, more of their own child support, S. 1036 allows states to claim that support as a welfare expense.
- **Expands Disregard:** IF states passthrough and disregard, or do not count, most (50 % or more) of the support paid against families' welfare benefits, S. 1036 relieves the state of the obligation to repay the Federal government its share of the collections.
- **Protects Children and Families:** IF states opt to passthrough and disregard more child support to families on public assistance, under S. 1036, that state must (1) maintain CSE program funding even though more child support payments are being distributed directly to families; and (2) protect families from potentially unreliable or overdue child support payments. In other words, states would be required to institute a budget or planning process that does not decrease a family's public benefit until that family actually has their child support in hand.

HELPING PARENTS HELP KIDS



Children's Rights Council



300 "I" Street N.E., Ste. 401, Washington, D.C. 20002-4369
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TESTIMONY

of David L. Levy, J.D.
President, Children's Rights Council (CRC)

before the

U.S. Senate
Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy
Washington, D.C.
The Honorable Don Nickles, Subcommittee Chairman
July 25, 2000

Dear Senator Nickles and Members of the
Subcommittee:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to
present a viewpoint shared by the Children's Rights
Council and its chapters in 32 states, Washington,
D.C., Europe, Asia and Africa.

Sincerely yours,

David L. Levy, J.D.
President, the Children's Rights Council (CRC)
300 "I" Street N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
websites: www.gocrc.com
www.infoparents.com

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Scottsdale, Arizona

Vicki Leachy
Author, Columnist
Deshares, Missouri

James Levine
Founder and Work Institute
New York, New York



July 25, 2000

Dear Chairman Nickles and Members of the Social Security and Family Policy:

Our Children's Rights Council (CRC), began in 1985, and is one of the oldest groups working for a child's right to two parents. We strongly support Fatherhood Legislation. We regard such legislation as parenting legislation, not just fatherhood legislation, because the result is to connect more fathers with mothers, and with their children.

CRC's focus has always been on promoting good parenting for children of separated and divorced parents. We have come increasingly to realize that social service agencies and our society are being overwhelmed with problems from children raised without two parents.

We strongly support measures to promote marriageability and to sustain marriage, as well as to make sure that the 18 million children of divorce and the 23 million children of never-married parents have the emotional, physical, psychological, and financial support of both of their parents.

1. TWO AMERICAS - TWO VERSIONS OF CHILDHOOD

Sometimes I think there are two Americas: one in which children are being raised in a healthy, happy way. Yet there is another America, and I do not mean to imply that it represents 50 percent of all children, or that all of them are poor, but it is a substantial number, in which children are abused, neglected, abandoned. Those children engage in substance abuse, criminality, and violence -- the kind of children that pediatric nurses, doctors, and teachers in our schools see all too often.

2. HIGHER RISK TO CHILDREN RAISED WITHOUT A FATHER

There are many reasons why so many children are having problems, but major researchers find one common denominator--the absence of a father in the household.

The higher risk of fatherless children on all anti-social indicators are spelled out in the Bayh-Domenici bill. Such risks to children were thoroughly discussed on the House floor November 10, 1999, prior to House passage of the Fathers Count bill by a strong bipartisan vote of 328 to 93. So the understanding of the risk factors is there -- now, how do we minimize that risk?

3. AMERICA NEEDS THE EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND FINANCIAL CONNECTION OF FATHERS TO CHILDREN

We congratulate Sens. Bayh and Domenici for introducing this bill. But this must not be just a jobs bill. Because of welfare reform, moms are getting jobs, often with low pay, and evening or weekend hours. Many poor dads are facing the same job market. Yet both moms and dads must cooperate together to help raise the children. Jobs are important, but Fatherhood Legislation should focus mainly on increasing the emotional, physical, and psychological connection of dads to their children. The welfare program began as a widow's relief program. Following World War II, it served as a program to help mothers and children when fathers were gone. The unintended consequences were that the programs began to demand that fathers be away from the family before the mother and children were eligible for assistance.

It is a good time to rethink this policy, and the unintended consequences of driving fathers away. Studies do not say that financial child support, as important as it is, improves childhood outcomes; fatherhood connections do. There is no substitute for a father's time with his children.

Fatherhood legislation should provide more grants and programs to non-profit organizations and faith-based groups that will help increase marriageability, support marriage, and work to keep both parents emotionally involved in children's lives if parents divorce, or are never married.

We respectfully suggest that specific examples of the kinds of programs sought by Congress should be spelled out in S. 1364, Sec. 102, Use of Funds Part (v), subsection (I) and any other portion of the bill where the Senate deems fit to insert such examples. This will ensure that block grants to states, as well as grants to non-profit and faith-based organizations, provide real programs with certifiable results. Other Congressional block grant legislation provide real-life examples of spending priorities.

Fatherhood legislation should include marriageability preparation classes, parenting education, counseling, mediation, shared parenting, parenting plans, assistance with access enforcement, access counseling, transfer centers for children, and website clearinghouses of information, so that mothers and fathers are prepared to get married, and if married, stay married, and to nurture their children.

4. WAYS TO INCREASE MARRIAGEABILITY FOR THE BENEFIT OF CHILDREN

A. PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING Florida recently enacted an innovative Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act, which gives a discount on marriage licenses for couples planning to marry if they

take a pre-marital counseling class. If they do not take the course, they must wait for a 3-day "cooling off" period to pass before marrying. Divorcing couples with minor children must take a 6 hour course on parenting education. CRC gave an award to the state of Florida and six other states for this kind of positive legislation at a press conference and reception on July 19, 2000.

B. COMPATIBILITY TESTING Some churches as well as secular jurisdictions are using pre-marital testing programs for parents who wish to evaluate their compatibility with each other. Up to 40% of young people decide not to marry after they take these tests; those who do marry are less likely to divorce than those who do not take the test. Compatibility testing would help families to have stable marriages.

C. REMOVE BARRIERS The single biggest reason that women and children leave the welfare rolls is marriage. Public policies that promote this should be strengthened. Marriage penalties should be reduced. Other benefits which are reduced because there is a second adult in the home should be re-evaluated.

5. WAYS TO SUSTAIN MARRIAGES FOR THE BENEFIT OF CHILDREN

A. MARRIAGE COUNSELING CRC honored California this year as the best state for providing marriage counseling. California has more marriage counselors per population than any other state, thus making counseling available to more people. Grants would enable states or non-profits to offer counseling free or at low-cost to those who cannot afford it.

B. PARENTING RESOURCES Parenting resources, such as classes, books, parenting plans and websites which focus on parenting are offered by secular groups, churches and synagogues. These parenting resources are developing all around the country and should be encouraged. However, most of them lack adequate funding. Funding is the key to these programs.

C. SHARED PARENTING Although shared parenting is normally thought of in terms of divorce, an analysis of data from the Census Bureau and the National Center for Health Statistics found that the states with the highest amount of physical shared parenting in 1989 and 1990 had the lowest divorce rate in 1991 through 1995. The cooperative skills for shared parenting and the focus on the well-being of children lead many parents to reconsider divorce. Shared parenting means that a child shall spend at least one third of the time on a year round basis with a parent. It would be logical to assume that shared parenting for never-married parents would also encourage them to remain involved in their children's lives. A grant for states to encourage shared parenting, where appropriate,

helps sustain marriage and reduce the divorce rate.

Economists Margaret F. Brinig and Douglas Allen analyzed 46,000 divorces filed in Connecticut, Virginia, Montana and Oregon in 1995. They came up with some surprises, which they describe in an article in the American Journal of Law and Economics, entitled "Those Boots are Made for Walking: Why Most Divorce Filers are Women."

The fear of not being able to live with their children causes some parents to stay together. Similarly, if there were joint custody, where each parent has a share of parenting, and not a clear winner or loser, parents would be more inclined to remain married. Brinig says she has come to believe that where joint custody is the norm, it would preserve marriages and protect children.

6. WAYS TO MAINTAIN TWO PARENTS IN A CHILD'S LIFE IF PARENTS ARE SEPARATED, DIVORCED OR NEVER-MARRIED

A. MORE ACCESS (VISITATION) Congress currently provides \$10 million a year in the Welfare Reform Act for access (visitation) services for all the states to share. That amount needs to be substantially increased, because people who need services are currently being turned away because of a lack of staff and funding.

Courts, child support offices, and non-profit organizations, like CRC, run programs such as transfer of children sites, parenting education, mediation, and parenting plan programs throughout the country. Never-married parents account for 40% to 50% of parents who use these sites. CRC and its chapters currently run a small number of transfer sites for children, parenting education, and parenting plan programs in 6 states--Maryland, Virginia, New York, Ohio, Illinois, Nebraska, and the District of Columbia. We know that some parents--including mothers--are seeing their children for the first time in these centers, which are usually court referred, and located in church day care centers. Substance abuse, communication problems, and re-integration of a parent to the family after a long absence are the main reasons for these centers. Family violence accounts for an estimated 15% of court referrals. Grants for access (visitation) programs have proven results in connecting parents to their children.

B. PROMOTE EXPEDITED PRO SE LEGAL HANDLING OF ACCESS DENIAL COMPLAINTS, PROMOTE PARENT EDUCATION CLASSES, PROMOTE DIVORCE MEDIATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO LITIGATION, PROMOTE "FRIENDS OF THE COURT" If Congress will provide incentives to states to enact laws which promote the connection of parents and their children, more positive results will occur. We should:

1. Promote expedited pro se legal handling of access denial complaints. One example of this is Idaho, where if a person complains of access denial, it can be handled in courts within days, not months.

2. Promote Parenting Education classes, as now required in Utah, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Virginia.

3. Promote Mediation, such as in California and other states where parents are required to participate in divorce mediation as an alternative to litigation. Mediation takes children out of the middle of vicious custody battles that enrich my fellow attorneys, but take bread from the table for children.

4. Promote "Friends of the Court," such as in Michigan, where staff informally handle access (visitation) complaints as well as support complaints. Michigan's system is not perfect, but it has had positive outcomes for many children emotionally as well as financially. These are examples of programs that connect parents to their children.

OBJECTIONS TO FATHERHOOD LEGISLATION

We should briefly discuss some objections we have heard to Congressional Fatherhood Legislation.

1. Objection -- There is supposedly no "trickle down" of resources to the children. One quarter of fathers who do not pay child support do not do so because they cannot afford it. This percentage is substantially higher in America's inner cities. It is impossible to get blood from a turnip. For those who can pay, studies have shown the single biggest reason they do not is that they are not connected to their children. Unless something is done to remedy the poverty cycle for some fathers, and the lack of access for some others, there will be no trickle down of support.

2. Objection -- There is a supposed lack of statistical data to justify fatherhood legislation. This is true in part, but more evidence is being developed and this could be remedied by building a statistical, evaluative component into these grants. Studies of the access demonstration grants authorized by Congress in 1988 were designed to connect children to their non-custodial parent; the results showed more parental satisfaction, less court time, and more child support compliance. Access to children enables dads to help pull moms out of the welfare system by encouraging independence and responsibility; and it is working.

3. **Objection** -- The assertion is that money should not be given to fatherhood programs because fathers are by their nature the source of family violence. Most of you in this room know what most fathers are not violent, and yet we always want to err on the side of children. This is an issue we have to tackle head on as we fund fatherhood programs. In the programs I am aware of, most parents have never been abusive, but those who have been, learn how not to be abusive. The programs I am aware of are carefully monitored. Should there be abuse, it would be reported to the proper agencies.

On a closing note, both presidential candidates have supported increased resources for fatherhood.

We again thank this subcommittee for your important work to help promote fatherhood, and therefore, to benefit children.

David L. Levy, J.D., President, CRC

**Statement of Representative Evelyn Lynn
Florida House of Representatives**

On behalf of the National Conference of State Legislatures

July 25, 2000

Mr. Chairman and Members of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy, I am State Representative Evelyn Lynn of Daytona Beach, Florida. I appear before you today on behalf of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). I currently serve on the Executive Committee of NCSL and am an active member of NCSL's Advisory Committee on Nurturing Responsible Fatherhood.

Mr. Chairman, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) believes in the importance of having a father involved in the life of every child. NCSL supports policies that nurture responsible families. Any policies regarding the role of parents must take into account that all families are not intact and stable. We believe that children deserve two involved parents. To that end, state legislators have an interest in policies that support intact families, encourage marriage and provide opportunities for fragile and fractured families to parent their children together. NCSL recognizes efforts to salvage some relationships may not be appropriate and there needs to be special awareness of the prevalence of domestic violence and abuse. We support efforts to assist parents with parenting skills, even in the absence of marriage, in order to have as stable a support system for the children involved as possible.

Mr. Chairman, we believe that the federal government should support these efforts through flexible funding and technical assistance, not federal mandates. In my testimony today, I will focus on the efforts of Florida and my colleagues in state legislatures around the country and make recommendations for federal action that would supplement these efforts.

State lawmakers support policies that encourage the formation of two parent households. Many single parents are successful in raising children in a single parent household. However, there is growing evidence that children who grow up with two involved parents are less likely to be poor, less likely to have contact with the criminal justice system, and less likely to become teen parents. However, these children are more likely to graduate from high school. Children need a strong family bond and support system, including the positive influence of fathers even when they do not live in the home, to help them become successful adults.

Because mothers and children are leaving the welfare rolls due to employment, sanctions and time limits, it is vital that these families have access to the emotional and financial contributions that fathers can make. The child support system lacks the tools to distinguish between those who have financial resources to pay child support and those who have little or no available resources. Some state policies are now reaching out to these dead broke dads and sorting them out from deadbeat dads.

As a member of the Florida State legislature, I helped craft legislation that established Florida's Commission on Responsible Fatherhood. We realized that something had to be done to respond to the fact that 30% of Florida's children do not live in the same home as their father. For the last four years, the Florida legislature has committed support and funding to this comprehensive statewide strategy. By establishing the Commission, Florida recognized the need for advocacy on behalf of fathers, research to inform our legislative effort, and outreach programs to increase father participation, involvement and employment. The Commission includes members of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government and the public. I serve on the Commission.

We fund Florida's Commission on Responsible Fatherhood each year with \$1 million in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds and \$250,000 each from our Department of Children and Families and our Department of Health. The Commission's purpose is to raise awareness of the problems created when a child grows up without a father, identify obstacles that prevent the involvement of responsible fathers in the lives of their children and identify and fund strategies that are successful in encouraging responsible fatherhood. Since 1996, we have funded 27 programs serving fathers in over 30 counties including five intensive service delivery programs serving fathers at day care centers, hospitals and prisons and five job placement and parent education programs to assist low-income, non-custodial fathers obtain employment, pay child support and become better dads.

Florida is by no means alone in this effort. Connecticut lawmakers embarked on a similar path in 1999, by passing legislation that requires state agencies to conduct an assessment of how their policies affect low-income fathers and creates a task force to develop an action plan for service delivery that includes the needs of fathers. Georgia uses the child support enforcement system to bring unemployed fathers who are behind in child support payments into job training programs operated by local community colleges. Title XX Social Services Block Grant is used to support Georgia's program.

Many other states feature model programs with strategies to improving a father's ability to become an involved and contributing parent, both emotionally and financially:

- **Building services to help fathers.** Developing and providing services to low-income fathers is a relatively new concept since most employment and family-related services available to low-income persons are directed toward women. Programs in California, Maryland, Missouri, Indiana and Georgia help fathers get jobs, keep jobs and pay continuous child support.
- **Prevention and planning for fatherhood.** Efforts in California, Maryland, Louisiana, North Carolina and Kentucky help focus on the male's role in pregnancy prevention.
- **Financing fatherhood programs.** Arizona, California, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia and Florida have approved appropriations for fatherhood initiatives.
- **Incarcerated fathers and their children.** States such as Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Vermont and Connecticut are successfully implementing programs to help jailed fathers connect with their children. North Carolina, Colorado and Illinois are beginning to link job

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assessment and training, child support and community support systems to the inmates who are entering the pre-release and released phases of their sentence.

Mr. Chairman, the NCSL Advisory Committee on Responsible Fatherhood just completed "Connecting Low-Income Fathers and Families: A Guide to Practical Policies". The Senate Finance Committee staff has distributed copies to your offices and I have additional copies with me this afternoon. The Guide highlights state programs and policies that support low-income dads as a means of giving them back their self-esteem, their independence, their manhood and their role as a responsible father. The Guide presents a thorough source of information and research on fathers and their role in children's lives.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

It is critical that there be a concerted effort at the Federal level to address the needs of low income non-custodial parents.

Mr. Chairman, I urge you to give every consideration and strong support to funding a national fatherhood initiative that would fortify what our states are trying hard to accomplish.

NCSL believes that a new federal fatherhood program should:

1. Provide funds to all states on a formula basis. Federal funds must be coordinated with our state efforts;
2. Ensure state legislative authority (often referred to as the "Brown amendment"). Much of the state work on fatherhood has involved state laws and budgetmaking decisions. Just like the TANF block grant, Welfare-to-Work Program, Workforce Investment Act, and Child Care Block Grant, in order to secure NCSL's support, there must be language ensuring state legislative authority to appropriate these funds through the budget process. This allows for an open discussion of state priorities;
3. Count state contributions to fatherhood toward their state MOE requirements under the 1996 welfare law. While this is already allowed, there is still much confusion in the regional offices and in the states about the use of MOE for fatherhood programs;
4. Provide states flexibility in determining eligibility of program participants;
5. Provide state flexibility to create or support programs at the local level;
6. Encourage collaboration on the state and local level;
7. And provide states the opportunity to use government, non-profit or faith-based providers as the state determines best fits the needs of their communities. While we ask for this flexibility we recognize that you would ask us to be accountable through evaluation.

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Only 18% of welfare recipients receive any type of continuous child support payment although states have recently sought to aggressively improve collection by employing a variety of strategies. Poor fathers have a difficult time keeping up with child support payments, and there is evidence that these fathers are unable, not unwilling to pay. These fathers try to provide some

informal support directly to the mothers of these children. These fathers often have not completed high school, have a sporadic work history, and may have an arrest record. Low-income fathers were often raised without fathers of their own and do not have role models for parenting.

NCSL believes that supporting efforts to help low-income fathers be better parents and providers will result in increased financial support and stronger connections with their children.

Improving the employment prospects for non-custodial parents is essential so parents will provide regular, on-going cash support to their children. 42% of families who have left welfare derive 30% of their income from child support. Child support enforcement is a critical component for the long-term success of welfare reform as the combination of earnings and child support makes low-income families self-sufficient.

However, federal child support policy can be a barrier to improving the payment of support by low-income non-custodial parents. NCSL supports federal legislation that lifts the barriers to states choosing to implement pass-through of child support payments directly to families. Currently federal law requires that state pay not only the state share of collected child support, but reimburse the federal government for its share if the state chooses to pass-through to families. NCSL strongly supports a change in federal law that eliminates the requirement that states reimburse the federal government if the state chooses to pass-through child support to families.

Mr. Chairman, we would support a new federal option for states to change distribution rules and pass through child support to parents currently receiving TANF and arrearages to parents who have left TANF and are working. It is critical, however, that this be a real option -- the federal government must share in the cost of passing through child support and not require states to pay both federal and state costs. We would oppose efforts to mandate changes in pass through and distribution policy at this time. Sixteen states finance their child support systems with child support collections. They would be particularly hard hit by a mandate. However, the mandate would affect all states financially and would require systems changes. States have been grappling with the costs and administrative burden of the 1996 child support mandates in the welfare law. Another mandate at this time would be especially burdensome.

NCSL also asks the federal government to provide states with MOE credit if states choose to pass-through child support to families.

We also urge the federal government to provide assistance to the states on the usage of current policy toward compromising of arrearage. These arrearages are often barriers to participation in fatherhood programs and to family reunification and marriage.

The federal government should clarify and provide state technical assistance regarding the current options for states to deal with child support arrears owed by an absent parent who later married or remarried the custodial parent, a non-custodial parent living in the household, or parents in fragile families.

WELFARE REFORM

One of the four goals of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 is to encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families. States like Florida are now using federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds and state Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds to create fatherhood programs including education and training, employment assistance, anger management, peer support, parenting classes, relationship building and marriage skills. However, until HHS issued final regulations in April, 1999, states were concerned that serving low-income non-custodial fathers with TANF funds would impact the time limits of the custodial mother and child.

Mr. Chairman, the federal government should clarify and provide technical assistance to the states regarding the usage of TANF and MOE funds for fatherhood programs.

On behalf of the National Conference of State Legislatures, thank you for consideration of my remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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**TESTIMONY OF
NOW LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND
ON "FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES"**

**SUBMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES SENATE
SOCIAL SECURITY AND FAMILY POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**Hearing on "Fatherhood Initiatives"
held on July 25, 2000**

**Jacqueline K. Payne, Esq.
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NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund**

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TESTIMONY OF NOW LEGAL DEFENSE ON "FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES"

NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund ("NOW Legal Defense") appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony on the importance of a national movement to encourage non-custodial fathers in the lives of their children, especially as it pertains to low-income families. We stand firm in our belief that there is an important federal role for providing support for parents and families, especially those living in poverty.

NOW Legal Defense is a leading national not-for-profit civil rights organization with a 30-year history of advocating for women's rights and promoting gender equality. In those three decades, we have steadfastly advocated that fathers should be encouraged to take a greater active interest and role in the lives of their children. Among NOW Legal Defense's major goals is securing economic justice for all women. Throughout our history, we have used the power of the law to advocate for the rights of poor women, focusing on increased access to childcare, reduction of domestic violence and sexual assault, and employment and reproductive rights.

At the federal level, there are at least two "fatherhood initiatives" pending in Congress: the Child Support Distribution Act (H.R. 4678) and the Responsible Fatherhood Act (S.1364, H.R. 4671). A third initiative, called Fathers Work, Families Win, has been proposed by Administration. While NOW Legal Defense supports initiatives that help families provide for their children's basic needs and that help low-income families move out of poverty, we question whether these proposals for federally funded "fatherhood initiatives" are the solution to—or even a band-aid for—the persistent problem of child poverty in America.

While these proposals are laudable in their goals, they ignore or misperceive the underlying causes of women's and children's poverty and fail to adequately deal with issues such as gender inequality. A notable exception is that portion of The Child Support Distribution Act that deals with reforming the child support system. These reforms will ensure that low income men are not unjustly punished by child support and welfare laws, and that child support paid on behalf of low income children actually reaches those children. NOW Legal Defense supports these provisions of the Child Support Distribution Act, but believes that they must be expanded to include reforms regarding payments made to the children currently on welfare—those children must not be left behind.

As originally drafted, both the Child Support Distribution Act and Responsible Fatherhood Act failed to deal with domestic violence—a potentially life threatening oversight given that both bills heavily promote marriage and the unification of absentee fathers with their children and the children's mother. Senator Bayh has made commendable changes to the Responsible Fatherhood Act to address domestic violence, including an acknowledgment that responsible fatherhood means a positive, healthy, and nonviolent relationship between father and child and recognition that "fatherhood initiatives" should not compromise the health or safety of the custodial parent or child. While Representative Johnson has made some improvements regarding domestic violence to the Child Support Distribution Act, that bill still fails to adequately protect women and children. Indeed, as

discussed more fully below, these bills may well result in federal funding of programs that do not understand the dynamics of domestic violence and their ignorance may consign women and children to dangerous, violent situations. Even programs that are sensitive to the issue but that lack expertise in domestic violence may not recognize the devastating impact domestic violence has on children; those programs may promote father involvement with children where it is unsafe and unwise to do so.

Moreover, both bills continue to focus on universal promotion of marriage and unification of the biological parents, rather than accepting the formation of families as they are and supporting more father involvement in the lives of the children where appropriate. This misguided approach has the effect of stigmatizing single, divorced, remarried, widowed, foster, adoptive and gay and lesbian families, and it will likely undermine any domestic violence safeguards that are put in place.

We urge the Committee to recognize the role of violence and gender inequity in perpetuating women and children's poverty and ask you not to enact legislation that will exacerbate these problems. In addition, we urge the Committee to recognize that marriage is not the best choice for all individuals who have children, and that Congress should not advocate for the creation or maintenance of marriages—especially those that could be harmful or dangerous.

"Fatherhood Initiatives" Should Break Not Reinforce Gender Stereotypes

The Child Support Distribution Act (H.R. 4678) and the Administration's proposal, Fathers Work, Families Win, would provide funding for non-custodial fathers to become economically sufficient under the outdated and stereotypical notion that paying a man a "family wage" is the solution to the family's poverty. These proposals, which rely on gender stereotypes and perpetuate specific gender roles with respect to support and care for children, pose significant barriers to gender equality. Under these stereotypical gender roles, women are expected to be the primary caregiver for children and to be economically dependent on men. Men, on the other hand, are expected to shoulder the entire financial burden for the family as well as act as disciplinarian—rather than loving parent—to their children. Unfortunately, adherence to stereotypical gender roles and the traditional division of family labor in our society have made it difficult for men who want to nurture and support their children emotionally and for women who want to provide economic support for their children. This ultimately diminishes the quality of parenting children can receive. Mothers and fathers should each be capable of contributing to the emotional and financial care of their children. Government programs and policies should not perpetuate antiquated and restrictive notions regarding the respective roles of women and men,¹ but instead should provide low income mothers and fathers with the social service assistance they need in order to provide the best possible care for their children.

NOW Legal Defense supports initiatives designed to encourage both mothers and fathers to be better parents, including those that support men who choose to stay home with their children; those that alter the perception of men as the sole, or primary, breadwinner; and those that encourage men to use family leave and sick days to care for their children. We vigorously oppose any initiatives tolerant of violence, as well as those that reinforce

stereotypes of men as biologically predisposed towards violence or other alleged male traits. We endorse a vision of "father" as one who has a positive, healthy, loving relationship with his children, and one who shares equally the responsibility for caregiving that has traditionally been relegated primarily to women.

Making Fathers More Self-Sufficient is Not the Answer to Women and Children's Poverty

Both the Child Support Distribution Act and the Administration's proposal rest on the erroneous assumption that making men better able to contribute to their children care will move women and children off of welfare and out of poverty. This erroneous assumption has led some to believe that "fatherhood initiatives" are the next step in welfare reform. Women and children make up 85% of low-income individuals, and 90% of those receiving welfare. If we are to end poverty, we must support proposals that ensure that all men and women are economically self-sufficient, and equally capable of supporting their families. The concept that the man is the sole provider for his family is contradicted by statistics describing what is happening in America today. The vast majority of women with young children work outside the home.² The notion that men should be paid a "family wage" operates to the disadvantage of women in the paid labor force. The gender wage gap persists: women make only 75.5 cents for every dollar men make.³ In addition, jobs that are held predominately by women consistently pay less than jobs that are held predominately by men.⁴ This disadvantage is compounded by the "second shift" phenomenon—the unpaid time and energy expended predominately by women to care for children, other family members, and the home. These factors combined deprive the families of both single and married women of the economic stability for which women work. If women were educated and trained for nontraditional jobs—jobs that have traditionally been held by men—and paid at a wage equal to that of their male counterparts, the families of single and married women would fare much better. This is particularly true for low-income families. Focusing on getting fathers and noncustodial parents a family wage without putting that same emphasis on mothers and custodial parents fails to address the true needs of low and middle-income families.

The combination of women as primary caregiver (work for which they are not paid) and their relative economic disadvantage in paid work as compared to men has had serious negative consequences for women and children in our society: 41% of all women and children in America today live below the poverty line;⁵ one out of every five children is raised in poverty.⁶ Being raised in poverty—regardless of family formation—has particularly negative consequences for children, as they are more likely to suffer from poor health, developmental delays, emotional and behavioral problems, limited educational attainment, and teen pregnancy.⁷ Welfare reform has done little to move women and children out of poverty; in fact, the lowest quintile has seen their poverty deepen.⁸

The "fatherhood initiatives" pending before Congress fail to address the factors that contribute to an individual's ability to move off welfare and out of poverty. Today's parents face considerable barriers to raising children in a safe, loving, healthy environment. These barriers include welfare requirements that promote "work first" over the care of children; the lack of education and training programs designed to move poor women into jobs that pay a living wage; the virtual absence of quality, affordable, accessible child care, health care that

is so expensive as to be out of reach; the lack of affordable transportation and housing; and overly aggressive child support enforcement when applied to non-custodial parents who do not have the ability to pay. In the vast majority of single and two-parent families, the parent(s) work outside the home. The general absence of support services for parents and the lack of affordable childcare have meant that parents are under a great deal of pressure to be both caregivers and full-time wage earners. These problems are exacerbated for families in which only one parent is actively involved in raising the children.

The Child Support System is in Need of Reform

Genuine reform of the child support and welfare laws is needed. For many years these laws have been overly punitive to poor, non-custodial fathers without providing assistance to the custodial mothers and their families. Child support should be first and foremost about getting additional money to children from their non-custodial parent. The current system does far too little to help the children who are supposed to be supported. Instead, all of the support paid by non-custodial parents whose children receive public assistance, and much of the support paid by non-custodial parents whose families ever needed assistance, goes to the state. The "child support" system under Title IV-D has become a state recovery system that penalizes poor fathers and fails to help their children. Men earning marginal wages, whether absent or present in the family, will not be able to provide enough support for their children to lift them out of poverty. Under the current child support system, children whose families are on welfare receive no additional money even when child support payments are made. This reflects a change in Federal law, which had previously required states to pay families the first \$50.00 of child support and disregard it in determining the welfare payment. Moreover, children whose families were ever on welfare often find they cannot receive the support owed them because the state insists on being reimbursed for past welfare assistance before the family can receive their support payments. The effect of these systems is to punish all poor families who ever needed public assistance except those who marry before the child is born and remain married until after the child reaches maturity.

It is critical that legislation supporting poor families contain child support reforms that: (1) ensure appropriate levels of obligation for non-custodial fathers; (2) ensure that families on welfare receive some of the money paid by the fathers (both to encourage payment by fathers and to ensure some improvement in economic conditions for the children by virtue of the child support payment); (3) disregard any child support payments passed through to the family receiving benefits; and (4) ensure that families that have transitioned off welfare receive all child support they are owed before the state reimburses itself for past assistance. NOW Legal Defense supports the portions of the Child Support Distribution Act regarding child support distribution for families that formerly received assistance. Unfortunately, neither the Child Support Distribution Act nor the Responsible Fatherhood Act includes the child support and welfare reforms necessary to assist families who are currently receiving welfare benefits. We urge reformation of these laws to assist the families most in need.

Marriage is Not the Solution for Everyone. Nor is it the Solution to Poverty

Our country consists of diverse family structures: those in which parents are married, single (including those who were never married, widowed, teen, or divorced), remarried, gay and lesbian, foster, and adoptive.⁹ These families have built loving, healthy relationships with their children and cooperative relationships with other caregivers, and deserve to be valued and respected.

Marriage may be the best choice for some individuals, but it is not the best choice for all. "Fatherhood initiatives" should respect personal privacy and decision-making, especially with respect to decisions about intimate relationships and reproductive choices. Both the Child Support Distribution Act and the Responsible Fatherhood Act promote the formation and maintenance of two-parent married families. The Child Support Distribution Act requires every "fatherhood program" it funds to promote marriage, and goes so far as to give five million dollars to a program that has married couples delivering program services to individuals in the inner city—a policy that will disproportionately impact lower income communities of color. A new amendment to this bill would push the promotion of marriage even further by including divorce education and reduction programs, including mediation and counseling. This is especially troubling for marriages in which there is a history of domestic violence. While the Responsible Fatherhood Act does not require every media or "fatherhood" program to promote marriage, it allocates 50% of its funds purely for the promotion of marriage.¹⁰

Parenting programs should focus on promoting cooperative parenting and should not attempt to influence parents' decisions regarding their intimate relationships or marital status. Children benefit greatly from the love and support of adults who are committed to their well being, regardless of whether those adults are in an intimate relationship with each other. They flourish in a safe, loving, healthy environment where their caregivers, including custodial parent(s), non-custodial parent(s), step-parent(s), and other caregivers, cooperate in a respectful manner to raise them with consistent messages about rules and expectations. The goal of "fatherhood initiatives" should be to foster this atmosphere of respect and cooperation between parents and/or caregivers, to give them the tools they need to provide for their children emotionally and financially, and to create a safe, loving, healthy environment for their children. Supportive services should be made available to all families, regardless of their marital status or family composition, including services to help improve employment opportunities, budget finances, promote nonviolent behavior, improve relationships, and provide financial support to children. Where parents choose to engage in an intimate relationship, resources should be available to help ensure that it is a safe, loving, and healthy one. As explained below, there are some situations where the non-custodial parent may endanger the welfare of either the custodial parent or child and in those situations cooperative parenting is not in the best interests of the child or of the custodial parent. In such cases, even cooperative parenting should be neither encouraged nor required.

Domestic Violence

Violence against women is one of the main causes of women's poverty. Domestic violence makes women poor and keeps them poor. Study after study demonstrates that a large proportion of the welfare caseload (consistently between 15% and 25%) consists of current victims of serious domestic violence.¹¹ Between half to two thirds of the women on welfare have suffered violence or abuse at some time in their lives.¹² Many battered women are economically dependent on their abusers; 33-46% of women surveyed in five studies said their partner prevented them from working entirely.¹³ Those who are permitted to work fare little better. Ninety-six percent reported that they had experienced problems at work due to domestic violence, with over 70% having been harassed at work, 50% having lost at least three days of work a month as a result of the abuse, and 25% having lost at least one job due to the domestic violence.¹⁴ Thus, battered women are overwhelmingly either totally economically dependent on the abuser or are economically unstable due to the abuse. Between 50-90% of battered women attempt to flee from their abusers,¹⁵ with over 50% of homeless women and children citing domestic violence as the reason they are homeless.¹⁶

For these women and their children, marriage is not the solution to poverty. Reunification could instead be a death sentence and will almost undoubtedly make them economically dependent on the abuser and unable to escape the abuse. Even interactions between the batterer and his child could be dangerous—both for the child and for the mother if she is forced to have contact with him. According to a nationally representative survey of over 6000 families, 50% of men who batter their partners also physically batter their children (more severe than slapping or spanking).¹⁷ In some cases, batterers intentionally injure their children in an effort to intimidate or control their partners; in other cases, children are injured during attacks on their mother.¹⁸ Whether or not there is physical abuse, there is nearly always emotional and psychological abuse; 80-90% of children living in abusive homes are aware of the violence and abuse.¹⁹ Children commonly report feelings of worry, fear and terror.²⁰ The abuse affects their relationships with their father; those relationships are often a source of pain, resentment, disappointment, confusion and ambivalence.²¹

Unfortunately, separation of parents increases the danger of abuse for battered women.²² Because much of this violence is perpetrated before and after visits, children's exposure to this violence is increased.²³ According to a 1996 report by the American Psychological Association, custody and visitation disputes are more frequent when there is a history of domestic violence.²⁴ Perpetrators of domestic violence are more than twice as likely as other fathers to fight for custody of their children as a means of punishing and maintaining control over the mother.²⁵ When they fight for custody, they win more often than not.²⁶ Not surprisingly, those fathers who were physically or sexually abusing their children prior to separation continued to do so in post-separation visits.²⁷ While supervised visitation centers have been utilized as an avenue for allowing visitation between batterers and their children, there are not enough supervised visitation centers and in many cases the security in those centers is inadequate, staff is not trained in domestic violence, and women and children are

abducted, harmed, or killed. According to one study, during visitation 5% percent of abusive fathers threaten to kill their children's mother, 25% of abusive fathers threaten to harm their children, and 34% threatened to kidnap their children. Thus, even supervised visitation centers are not always safe.

Congress must not promote father involvement without recognizing that some fathers will have a history of domestic violence and, in some cases, father involvement is not in the best interest of the children. Contrary to the position of some fatherhood advocates, the mere presence of one's biological parent is not the most important factor in a child's successful upbringing. Children excel when they are safe and loved. Countless studies show that children who witness violence and those who are victims themselves suffer enormous physical, psychological, and social damage.²⁸ Children who have been abused and neglected are more likely to perform poorly in school, to commit crimes, to experience emotional and sexual problems and to abuse alcohol and substances.²⁹ Any "fatherhood initiative" should explicitly recognize this reality and should ensure that father involvement is not promoted for fathers with a history of domestic violence in the same manner as it is for other fathers.

Senator Bayh has made some important additions to the Responsible Fatherhood Act regarding domestic violence that are intended to secure safety for women and children. Those changes include clear statements that "responsible fatherhood" means being nonviolent and that any promotion of fatherhood must always recognize and promote the values of nonviolence. The amendments require states to ensure that "fatherhood programs" receiving funds under this legislation have state and local domestic violence information and resource materials, and to encourage these programs to coordinate with state and local domestic programs. The revised bill also restricts the use of these funds for court related matters, including visitation and custody, among other things. Similar amendments regarding domestic violence have also recently been added to the Child Support Distribution Act of 2000, including adding to the purposes of promoting marriage, disseminating information on the causes and treatment for domestic violence and child abuse, a requirement that every "fatherhood program" agree to educate participants on the causes of domestic violence and child abuse and information about local programs to prevent and treat abuse. The bill also contains a similar restriction on the use of funds for visitation, custody and legislative advocacy. While well intentioned, the language regarding "treatment" for domestic violence is too vague and can do more harm than good if left as is. While many Batterer Intervention Programs have come into creation over the last few years, the field is young and developing. A number of programs adhere to a philosophy and guidelines that are endorsed and accepted by experts in the field of domestic violence, but many more that run unsafe and unacceptable operations. Advocates have presented Representative Johnson and the House Ways and Means Committee with safer and more appropriate alternatives to this amendment; we hope that these amendments are adopted to ensure that effective domestic violence safeguards are put in place.

Unfortunately, other essential safeguards have been left out. Neither bill requires that the "fatherhood programs" collaborate with state or local domestic violence coalitions or requires that recognized experts in the field of domestic violence on domestic violence and its impact on children train program employees. Neither bill requires that the "fatherhood programs" assess whether participants in the program have a history of domestic violence, or describe procedures for dealing with such participants—including, among other things, how the program would alter its policy of promoting marriage or father involvement for such a participant, and what precautions would be taken to ensure that any involvement with the child was safe for the mother and child. Where the very lives of these women and children are at stake, we cannot afford to encourage the involvement of fathers who have a history of domestic violence without taking every reasonable precaution, and without recognizing that in some cases, father involvement is not appropriate. Unfortunately, both of these bills continue to promote marriage and father involvement without requiring these precautions.

This Congress has consistently recognized that domestic violence is a serious national problem and has made efforts to minimize the severe risk to women and children from that violence. We urge you to reject fatherhood legislation that ignores those very real risks and devotes precious federal dollars to programs that may in fact contribute to the problem of violence against women that this Congress has valiantly tried to ameliorate.

While we urge you to recognize the danger involved for these women and the need to include safeguards in any fatherhood legislation, we also appreciate that not all men or all non-custodial fathers are batterers. It is in our collective interest to promote the end to all poverty (including men's), to promote men's ability and willingness to pay child support for their children, and to have that child support passed through to the children. Furthermore, we embrace the promotion of men's increased responsibility for contraception, childcare, and positive, healthy relationships with their children, as well as cooperative co-parenting between custodial and non-custodial parents.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,



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NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund

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- ¹ The Supreme Court has repeatedly made clear that sex-based stereotyping is an impermissible form of gender discrimination. See *United States v. Virginia*, 518 U.S. 515, 541-46 (1996); *Mississippi Univ. for Women v. Hogan*, 458 U.S. 718, 725 (1982); *Califano v. Goldfarb*, 430 U.S. 199, 211 (1977) (plurality opinion); *Weinberger v. Weisenfeld*, 420 U.S. 636, 645 (1975).
- ² See *Statement on Equal Pay, Submitted to the Senate Comm. on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions*, June 22, 2000 (statement of Iraseaman Garza, Director of Women's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Labor).
- ³ See *id.* African American women earn 64 cents for every dollar earned by a white man, and Hispanic women earn 55 cents.
- ⁴ See *id.*
- ⁵ See UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU, CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY (P60-207), POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES (1998).
- ⁶ See ARLOC SHERMAN, CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND, POVERTY MATTERS: THE COST OF CHILD POVERTY IN AMERICA, 1 (1997).
- ⁷ See Jeanne Brooks-Gunn & Greg J. Duncan, *The Effects of Poverty on Children*, 7 FUTURE OF CHILDREN 2 at 57-64 (1997).
- ⁸ See WENDELL B. PRIMUS, ET AL., CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES, THE INITIAL IMPACTS OF WELFARE REFORM ON THE INCOMES OF SINGLE-MOTHER FAMILIES (1999).
- ⁹ See CNN, *Survey: Only a Quarter of U.S. Households of "Traditional" Families*, Nov. 24, 1999.
- ¹⁰ One of the new modifications to this bill will help to ensure that the type of marriage being promoted is one that is loving, healthy, and nonviolent. Senator Bayh has added an amendment that will require that experts in domestic violence are consulted in the development of the media campaigns, and that each media communication contain contact information for a local domestic violence shelter or resource center.
- ¹¹ See JODY RAPHAEL AND RICHARD M. TOLMAN, TRAPPED BY POVERTY, TRAPPED BY ABUSE: NEW EVIDENCE DOCUMENTING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WELFARE, 21 (1997).
- ¹² See MARY ANN ALLARD ET AL., IN HARMS WAY? DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, AFDC RECEIPT AND WELFARE REFORM IN MASSACHUSETTS, 12, 14 (1997) (64.9% of 734 women); Ellen L. Bassuck et al., *The Characteristics and Needs of Sheltered Homeless and Low-Income Housed Mothers*, 276 JAMA 640 at 12, 20 (1996) (61.0% of 220 women); WILLIAM CURCIO, PASSAIC COUNTY STUDY OF AFDC RECIPIENTS IN A WELFARE-TO-WORK PROGRAM: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS, 12, 14 (1997) (57.3% of 846 women).
- ¹³ See UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE, REPORT TO CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: PREVALENCE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT AMONG WELFARE RECIPIENTS, 7 (1998).
- ¹⁴ See Joan Zorza, *Women Battering: High costs and the State of the Law*, 25 CLEARINGHOUSE REV. 4 (1991).
- ¹⁵ See Patricia Horn, *Beating Back the Revolution*, DOLLARS AND SENSE, Dec. 1992 at 21.
- ¹⁶ See Joan Zorza, *Woman Battering: A Major Cause of Homelessness*, 28 CLEARINGHOUSE REV. 383, 384-85 (1994).
- ¹⁷ See MURRAY A. STRAUS & RICHARD A. GELLES, PHYSICAL VIOLENCE IN AMERICAN FAMILIES (1996).
- ¹⁸ See Einat Peled, *Parenting by Men Who Abuse Women: Issues and Dilemmas*, BRIT. J. SOC. WORK, Feb. 2000 at 29.
- ¹⁹ See JANET CARTER & SUSAN SCHECHTER, FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND, SUGGESTED COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE CHILD WELFARE RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (1997).
- ²⁰ See Peled, *supra* note 17, at 27.
- ²¹ See *id.*
- ²² See *id.* at 28.
- ²³ See *id.*
- ²⁴ See AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, VIOLENCE AND THE FAMILY: REPORT OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTIAL TASKFORCE ON VIOLENCE AND THE FAMILY, 40 (1996).
- ²⁵ See *id.*
- ²⁶ See D.G. Saunders, *Child Custody Decisions in Families Experiencing Women Abuse*, 39 SOC. WORK 391 at 51-59 (1994).
- ²⁷ See Peled, *supra* note 17, at 28.
- ²⁸ See Lucy Salcido Carter et al., *Domestic Violence and Children: Analysis and Recommendations*, 9 The Future of Children 3, at 5-7 (1999).
- ²⁹ See Joy D. Osofsky, "The Impact of Violence on Children," THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN, Winter 1999, at 37 (1999).



**NATIONAL PRACTITIONERS NETWORK
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**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
SOCIAL SECURITY AND FAMILY POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE
FATHERHOOD LEGISLATION HEARING**

July 25, 2000

215 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Presented by
Preston J. Garrison
Executive Director

National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families, Inc.

Chairman Nickles, members of the sub-committee, the 300 members of the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families (NPNFF) express their sincere appreciation to you for holding this hearing on issues relating to responsible fatherhood. We commend you, Chairman Roth, and Ranking Minority Member Senator Moynihan for this expression of interest in and concern for the promotion of positive engagement of fathers in the lives of their children and their families.

We are also grateful to Senator Evan Bayh and to Senator Pete Domenici for their championing of these issues in the United States Senate through introduction of the Responsible Fatherhood Act of 1999, and to the members of the Senate Finance Committee who are co-sponsors of S. 1364 — Senators Breaux, Graham, Jeffords, Kerrey, Moynihan, and Robb — for their recognition that “responsible fatherhood” is a bipartisan issue worthy of the nation’s interest.

As you will hear in the testimony presented to you today, America’s children are ritually celebrated as “the country’s future.” Yet society’s efforts over the past half century to improve the lives and prospects of its youngest members have met with, at best, mixed results.

A quarter of our nation’s children live below the poverty level. Over 1.5 million of them have a parent in prison. Almost half a million teenagers give birth each year. Fewer than 75% of all teens graduate from high school; among African Americans and Hispanics the graduation rate is 58% and 52%, respectively. On any given day, over 100,000 of our nation’s children are homeless. While there are many influences that have contributed to this dilemma, studies have shown that the absence of fathers in the lives of their children is a major factor.

Increases in divorce rates, out-of-wedlock births, and the breakdown of traditional family supports have reduced the participation of many fathers in the lives of their children, even though there is generally an inherent desire on the part of fathers to be involved with their children. Public policy decisions, many of which have had a number of negative unintended consequences (including that of distancing fathers from their children), coupled with a changing economy, have exacerbated this trend. And, social programs designed to help children have traditionally been focused on the maternal parent, excluding fathers. But studies leave no doubt that a child's well-being is enhanced by the positive and active involvement of both mother *and* father in the child's development.

Growing awareness among professionals working on behalf of children, as well as among policymakers, funders, and others, of the importance of involving fathers in the lives of children has led to an emerging "fatherhood field" as programs are developed throughout the nation to support men – particularly young, poor, unmarried men – in their efforts to be positively involved with their children and to become more productive members of society. Many of these fatherhood initiatives are developed as projects of organizations already existent to serve mothers and children; some are extensions of community development efforts; others are developed as stand-alone programs. Their efforts, while directed at fathers, have much larger target audiences: first and foremost, children, and then families, communities, and society in general.

Programs differ to meet the diverse needs of individual communities. Most, however, share certain components, including working with men to develop their parenting and co-parenting skills, job readiness and employability skills, relationship skills, and spirituality. Programs also provide educational support services, assistance with legal issues, and coordination of community resources.

The professionals who run fatherhood programs, and who are NPFF's members, come from a variety of backgrounds: social work, children services, juvenile justice, community development, early childhood education, mental health, and social activism, to name only a few. They bring with them enthusiasm, passion, caring, and (in many cases) the personal experience of growing up without a father in their own lives. Their training is diverse, and sometimes only peripherally related to the challenges they face in this emerging profession.

Like other developing fields before them, those working in the fatherhood arena are faced with a myriad of challenges:

- **They are often inventing programs and practices to meet immediate needs.**
- **There is a lack of consistency in outcomes and programs, and collaboration is rare due to limited communication and knowledge-sharing.**
- **They are isolated, and rarely have either the financial or professional support resources they need.**
- **Too often, supervisory personnel have little understanding of the relationship of the fatherhood program to other agency initiatives, and provide too little**

support to the fatherhood practitioners.

- **Services are often fragmented.**
- **Those traditionally supportive of programs to assist mothers are inherently suspicious of fatherhood programs, fearful that funding will be diverted from their programs, or that women will be put at physical risk.**

Practitioners have much to contribute to the fatherhood field beyond their obvious and crucial role in providing direct services to their clients. Their expertise and understanding of the issues involved in developing and implementing programs, the lessons they have learned through often painful trial and error, and their unique front-lines perspective offers lessons that should be shared with researchers, policymakers, the media, and a concerned public, as well as with the fathers, mothers, and children they seek to assist.

This is why federal legislation that establishes "responsible fatherhood" as a public policy priority for the nation is so important at this time. For the goals and objectives of welfare reform to succeed, serious attention must be paid to building the capacity of low-income working and fragile families to attain the level of economic sustainability necessary to maximize the potential for children to grow up free of poverty and dependence on the government. To accomplish this, we must give attention to increasing the ability of fathers, whether or not they live with their children, to become employable in the new workforce so that they can contribute both economically and emotionally to their children's development.

One of the best examples of how the public sector can enhance the ability of low-income fathers to be supportive of their children and contribute to the community is the Georgia Fatherhood Program — a partnership of state agencies promoting skills development, job placement, and payment of child support. This is one of the country's most successful models for helping "deadbroke dads" become re-engaged in their children's lives. We need more programs of this kind throughout the country.

As this sub-committee considers "fatherhood" legislation, the members of NPNFF, the "front line" providers who are working in local communities, urge you to consider the importance of fathers — all fathers — to their children.

We encourage you to help create public policy that will encourage and support responsible fatherhood — policy that recognizes the diversity of family formation in America today; policy that focuses on promoting a philosophy of co-operative parenting among unmarried and non-custodial parents; policy that focuses on building employment skills and sustainable wage work as a means strengthening fragile families; and policy that provides a financial investment by the federal government in local community-based responsible fatherhood programs. While national public awareness campaigns and national demonstration programs are important elements for building the emerging fatherhood field and for testing program models, the community-based programs that are currently

working throughout the country to enhance the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children also need financial resources, if a real difference is going to be seen as a result of their work.

We urge that you support development of public policy encouraging a greater investment of surpluses in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families funds and of Welfare-to-Work funds to support programs and services preparing low-income fathers for "real jobs" so they can support their children and become economically independent. It is through the investment in community-based fatherhood programs that federal and state governments can join with the private foundations such as Ford, Charles Stewart Mott, Annie E. Casey, the Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina, and the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth to make a lasting difference in helping men to improve their social and economic prospects. Through this investment, families, neighborhoods, communities, and the entire nation will be strengthened.

The primary beneficiaries, however, will be those with whom we must be most concerned – the fragile families with whom NPNEF practitioners work. The young, low-income, non-custodial father who wants to be a part of his children's lives but needs help in being a positive presence will get that assistance. Mothers will benefit as well, as they are able to share the responsibility for the dauntingly difficult work of raising a child. But it is the children who stand to gain the most from a stronger, growing fathers and fragile families field. By intervening effectively now, we take major strides in reducing the likelihood that the children of fragile families will themselves become candidates for intervention in the future.

Thank you for your concern for these important issues, and for your willingness to consider strategies to effectively address them.



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RESOLUTION ON FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES

Adopted by the NCSEA Board of Directors on July 29, 2000

Introduction

The 1996 PRWORA legislation established a new paradigm for U.S. social policy, making family self-sufficiency the ultimate goal of the welfare system. With the establishment of this time-limited and work-oriented family support system, the purpose of the Child Support program similarly evolved to give greater emphasis to promoting family self-sufficiency instead of the historical welfare cost recovery purpose. NCSEA endorses this change and supports policies and initiatives to promote responsible fatherhood as a path to family self-sufficiency.

Research increasingly shows that responsible loving fathers make a valuable contribution to the well-being of their children and to society; that a majority of unwed fathers and mothers are involved at the time of the birth of their child; and that young unwed fathers and mothers both need services in order to support their families. More than any other agency of state government, the Child Support program has the responsibility and is in a position to reach out to fathers who need supportive services, and to benefit by working cooperatively with fatherhood initiatives that provide these services. Child Support agencies are already involved in forging relationships with fathers through partnerships with community-based organizations. Further, Child Support agencies provide a natural link to coordinate with TANF agencies and with Workforce Development Boards to develop family self-sufficiency.

Therefore, The National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) resolves that:

- 1) Fathers are important to their families and low-income fathers need services to help them provide emotional and financial support.
- 2) Financial obligations for low-income fathers of fragile families must be based on ability to pay, including a realistic assessment of earning capacity.
- 3) The role of the IV-D agency in fatherhood initiatives is to participate in partnerships with community-based organizations and other public agencies to help fathers negotiate the Child Support system, rather than IV-D agencies directly providing such services.
- 4) Legislation is needed to fund community-based organizations to provide services for low-income fathers to help them establish paternity and meet their financial and emotional responsibilities and thereby promote child well-being.
- 5) The child support community should have an active participatory voice in all funding decisions related to initiatives designed to aid family self-sufficiency, especially with regard to the TANF, WIA and Welfare to Work programs.

Background:

Recent research has reinforced findings on the importance of fathers. It shows that responsible, loving fathers make a valuable contribution to the well-being of their children and to society. Children who grow up without a responsible father in their lives are more likely to be poor, to drop out of school, to end up in foster care or juvenile justice facilities, to bear their own children out-of-wedlock, and to be under-employed as adults. Research also shows that at the time of the birth four out of five unwed mothers and fathers are romantically involved, over half of unwed parents of low-income children are living together, and over two-thirds say their chances of marriage of 50-50 or better. Further, mothers reported that fathers provided support to them during the pregnancy, and over ninety percent of the mothers said they wanted the father to help raise the baby.

Finally, research shows that the profiles of young, unwed fathers are remarkably similar to those of the mothers. Of the poor non-custodial fathers who do not pay child support and the poor custodial mothers who do not receive child support, 43% of these fathers and mothers were high school dropouts. Additionally, 30% of these fathers had been out of work for up to 3 years, and 32% had been out of work for more than 3 years. Corresponding figures for mothers were 31% and 34% respectively. Finally, total family income was \$4,861 for fathers and \$7,408 for mothers. Thus, both partners need services to support to their children.

More than any other agency in state government, the child support program has a responsibility, and is in a position, to reach out to fathers, and to benefit from supporting fatherhood initiatives. As the Child Support program requires fathers to pay support, so it must also help them position themselves to be able to assume this responsibility. Fathers have a long-term responsibility for their children starting at birth. Under the PRWORA system of time-limited assistance to families, Child Support is the primary agency with long-term responsibility for children. Because of this, Child Support must work with both parents, and both parents must work with child support, to provide the best financial and emotional support possible. This must include a Child Support commitment to obligations based on current ability to pay and a realistic assessment of capacity to earn, as well as to expeditiously modify orders.

Child Support agencies are already involved in forging relationships with fathers through partnerships with community-based organizations providing services to fathers. This activity is often at the initiative of community-based organizations who recognize the importance of establishing paternity and paying child support as a key element of responsible fatherhood. Thus, child support agencies have learned the need to exercise flexibility in working with the fragile family population. They have also learned that the success in working with low-income fathers will help the Child Support program meet performance goals.

Child Support agencies provide a natural link to coordinate with TANF agencies and with Workforce Development Boards to develop family self-sufficiency. An effective fatherhood initiative for fathers of fragile families should be coordinated with the state TANF agency and the state Workforce Development Board so that there is a comprehensive strategy to develop self-sufficiency for the family. Child Support agencies already have such a relationship with the TANF agency, including computer data links between mothers and fathers, and are establishing relationships with the Workforce Development Boards. This linkage is crucial to the successful operation of a fatherhood initiative.

TESTIMONY OF U.S. SENATOR DANIEL K. AKAKA (D-HI)
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY & FAMILY POLICY
Fatherhood Hearing, July 25, 2000

I would like to thank Chairman Nickles, Ranking Member Breaux, and members of the Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy for giving me the opportunity to submit a statement for this hearing on fatherhood initiatives. I commend them for raising the issue of fatherhood to this level of visibility and for examining meaningful, related legislative efforts such as the Bayh/Domenici fatherhood bill and Kohl child support bill.

As a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, I well understand the high responsibility of fatherhood. You must be a strong and solid presence in your children's lives, guide them as they mature and develop into teenagers and adults, and fulfill duties to your partner in your special relationship as parents of those children.

I am also a former teacher, vice principal, and principal. Through my experiences in several of Hawaii's schools, I worked a lot of hours with families in a vast range of situations and children of all ages. I saw first-hand the differences in children who had very active and connected fathers vs. those who had painfully absent fathers.

We know that children's success in school is significantly higher when both parents are closely involved in their learning process and educational decisions. Furthermore, as stated in a recent issue of Poverty Research News by the Joint Center for Poverty Research, fathers' emotional investment in, attachment to, and provision of resources for their children are associated with the well-being, cognitive development, and social competence of young children, even after factors such as family income are taken into account.

In the face of research like this, it is difficult to comprehend why certain fathers deprive their children of what would be a steadying force in their lives. It is troubling to know that the number of children in this country living with both parents has greatly decreased, from 77 percent in 1980 to 68 percent in 1998. About 18 million children live apart from their fathers and one-third of these children are poor. In my state of Hawaii, more than one in five families do not have fathers present in the home.

The reality in some of these households is that some fathers simply do not care and never come back. However, many others are kept away from their families because they cannot provide for them – they are "dead broke" instead of "dead beat" dads.

Just as is the case for many single mothers or mothers on welfare, many of these fathers struggle financially because they cannot find and hold regular jobs. Some cannot read or

have a learning disability. Some did not complete high school or obtain a GED. Some lack skills needed in the workplace or significant work experience.

Many of these fathers, or non-custodial parents, are subject to intermittent employment or jobs that pay below a living wage and therefore cannot meet their child support requirements. Indeed, about \$47 billion in delinquent child support payments is owed to America's children. This increases the hardships faced by the custodial parents and children who are then unable to count on a steady stream of financial support each month, in addition to any other sources they may be able to tap. According to the Center for Law and Social Policy, child support amounts to 26 percent of the family's budget, or \$2000 per year. Child support complements work by helping increase workforce participation by single mothers, and stabilizes and supplements any low-wage earnings. Therefore, one key to lifting many low-income families to self-sufficiency is ensuring that fathers have the tools to find and retain a job that pays a sufficient wage.

One program proposed by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) that seeks to address this need is the Fathers Work, Families Win program. This initiative looks to improve the employment potential of certain low income individuals, including fathers, who suffer generally lower levels of education and work experience. Because of such shortfalls, these individuals usually end up accepting jobs that pay relatively low wages and have few benefits. Many have been on the welfare rolls or are living under conditions that make them vulnerable to becoming dependent on Federal assistance.

We must not forget that these individuals have the potential to make substantial contributions to the economy and, given the opportunity, can become self-sufficient and successfully support their families. This is one reason why I have encouraged my colleagues to fund the Fathers Work, Families Win program in Fiscal Year 2001.

The portion of the program entitled Families Win would provide \$130 million in competitive grants for programs to help low income parents stay employed, move up the career ladder, and remain off welfare. The program's Fathers Work component would provide \$125 million for competitive grants to help certain non-custodial parents find a job, maintain employment, and advance on their career path.

Fathers Work, Families Win seeks to build on the investments and partnerships started under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the Welfare-to-Work program. State and local Workforce Investment Boards would be eligible applicants under both parts of the program. These Boards have been implementing WIA across the country, reforming the way in which job training and job placement services are conducted. Fathers Work, Families Win funds would enable the Boards to further integrate services for the population of low income workers under programs such as WIA, Wagner-Peyser grants, Welfare-to-Work grants, and grants under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. This integrated approach would help to ensure that many low income

families will not fall through the cracks and will find it easier to use the network of services at their disposal. I urge my colleagues to take a closer look at this proposed program.

I would like to focus further on an existing program, which currently serves the needs of low-income fathers as well as low-income mothers, and that is the Welfare-to-Work program. Congress created this program as a part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 to complement the TANF program and help the hardest-to-employ welfare recipients and non-custodial parents.

Last year, I introduced the Welfare-to-Work Amendments of 1999 which included provisions to reauthorize the program and improve access for more low income individuals. I felt that states needed to be given more time to firmly establish their Welfare-to-Work programs; states greatly varied in their preparedness to put their programs into place and therefore did not apply for funding until later in the first grant cycle.

In addition, the program's original eligibility criteria were unnecessarily restrictive and, as a result, kept program enrollment levels and percentage of funds spent by formula and competitive grantees quite low. As the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) was being implemented, important job-related services provided by Welfare-to-Work were being hindered.

Fortunately, dramatic Welfare-to-Work eligibility changes were included in the Consolidated Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2000, which I thank my colleagues for working on and supporting. These eligibility changes have accelerated Welfare-to-Work enrollments around the country for competitive grantees, which started taking advantage of the changes on January 1, 2000. By the first quarter of this year, preliminary reports say that 30 percent of competitive grantees reported enrollment increases of 50 to 100 percent due to the new criteria.

Unfortunately, it appears that we may close the 106th Congress without either extending the expenditure period for already appropriated Welfare-to-Work funds or renewing the program itself. Again, new eligibility changes only took effect for competitive grantees at the beginning of this year and will not take effect for formula grantees until later this year. Renewed Welfare-to-Work efforts must be given more time to run.

Because no action has been completed on extending the program, many innovative and new state Welfare-to-Work programs and promising public and private partnerships formed under these programs will be cut short. Without an extension or reauthorization, worthwhile efforts at the State and local levels to help low income families will be adversely impacted.

An abrupt end to the Welfare-to-Work program would cause significant investments to go to waste. As stated in the attached U.S. Conference of Mayors letter dated June 10, 2000, "Without the extension of the Welfare-to-Work program, welfare reform will be dealt a serious setback in our nation's cities which are home to the highest concentrations of people still on welfare." The letter goes on to note that although welfare rolls have decreased significantly across the country, "great numbers of former welfare clients living in cities who are in need of services still remain." These are the hardest-to-help families who need our greatest assistance.

Furthermore, many of these individuals will be reaching their lifetime limit on welfare benefits imposed by the 1996 PRWORA and will no longer be able to rely on regular cash assistance to support their families. We cannot allow these families to be left without any safety net and should continue pursuing efforts to help them become financially self-sufficient, which is what Welfare-to-Work aims to do.

I strongly urge my colleagues on the Finance Committee to seriously examine the continuing need for Welfare-to-Work support services and new proposed efforts such as Fathers Work, Families Win. Perhaps if Congress is unable to act on Welfare-to-Work this year, the upcoming reauthorization of TANF will provide an excellent opportunity for future action, and will integrate an examination of these programs, their effects on the fathers that are targeted for assistance, and any other initiatives that can help fathers fulfill their responsibilities to their children.

However, it is hard for anyone to deny the importance of a father's attention and love for his child, and his presence in his child's life. I am pleased that this subcommittee has recognized the importance of considering these and other related issues, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide comment. I look forward to working with the subcommittee in the future on these matters significant to America's families.

**Compilation of Statements Made by Participants in
the Father Resource Program in Indianapolis, Indiana
Finance Committee
Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy
July 25, 2000**

Statements provided by:

**Christopher Harris
Brandon Dorsey
David Clardy
DeMarcus Styles
Brandy Alexander
Anthony Wilburn**

**Father Resource Program
Dr. Wallace McLaughlin
Wishard Health Services
1001 West 10th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202
(317) 630-2486**

1. What circumstances put you in a position to seek help from the Father Father Resource Program?

Christopher - I needed help to find a job. Learn how to be a better father.

Brandon - I needed a job to get my G.E.D.

David - I found out I was going to become a father.

DeMarcus - I needed to stay busy and get information on things.

Anthony - I found myself in the mirror staring at the father of four beautiful little girls who needed me to be my best. So I asked for help!

Brandy - I came here because I had nowhere to turn. I needed help in life.

2. What were your thoughts when you found out you were going to be a father?

Christopher - I was very excited. I was hoping that it would come out healthy.

Brandon - I was kind of scared at first but I love children.

David - I was happy, and wanted to do my best to be a very good father.

DeMarcus - I had doubts at first like I do know, but when I find out the truth I will be cool.

Anthony - I couldn't begin to imagine the responsibility that I had to account for.

Brandy - I didn't know what I was going to do.

3. If you did not act responsibly in the past why didn't you?

Christopher - Because, I didn't really have the money to do so. Sometimes it wasn't because I didn't want to, its that at the time I wasn't able.

Brandon - I realized that this was my child so I had to step up and be a man.

David - Immaturity

DeMarcus - Immature

Anthony - I have trouble sometimes committing to long term task. I'm afraid to fail.

Brandon - I didn't know how hard it was to be a father and all of the things I needed to do for my child.

4. What role did the Father Resource play in your ability to be a good father, emotionally and financially?

Christopher - It showed me what rights I have as a father and what I needed to do to be a good father.

Brandon - I learned a little from people from around the world that came to talk to us.

David - They help me build my self-confidence, and help me understand the importance of keeping a job and building a future for my family.

DeMarcus - It showed me how important it is to be in a child's life; and financially I was not working at the time so that helped a good deal.

Anthony - When I entered the classroom, I saw people or young brothers just like me. I didn't feel alone anymore.

Brandy - It helped me to become closer with my child and mentally showed me my child needed me for support.

5. Did this program change your life? Do you believe it changed your child's life?

Christopher - It changed my life in a way. It helped me go to school to do engineering. It helped me get the skills I wanted.

Brandon - It haven't changed my life yet but I was willing to turn my life around.

David - yes

DeMarcus - A little, it got me on my feet. My child really wasn't involved.

Anthony - I know this much, the program offers me new avenues, new choices and new personal challenges.

Brandy - yet it did, it changed how my child seen me.

6. What would have happened if this program did not exist?

Christopher - I probably wouldn't have been able to go to school, and I wouldn't have been able to learn about life, and fatherhood.

Brandon - I would have to learn all by myself and teach my child what I know and find another place to study for my G.E.D.

David - There would have been an increase in all the major statistics: Fatherless children, drug activity, gang activity, STD's, and homicides.

DeMarcus - Young men would not have the chance to get the help that they need from other programs like they did from the Father Resource Program.

Anthony - I'm not sure, but I glad it does because here I come face to face with my problems and have to make solutions.

Question number 6 continued...

Brandy - I would probably be jumping from job to job not knowing what to do next.

7. In your opinion what needs to be done to help fathers be responsible?

Christopher - Someone to listen them. To understand what we have to go through instead of putting us down. Find ways to build us up. Give us confidence and appreciation.

Brandon - To have jobs waiting and ready for all the man that graduate.

David - There needs to be more positive role models, men who have been through the rough need to minister to the young men just starting out.

DeMarcus - Good support from family and friends.

Anthony - Wish I knew.

Brandy - Help the fathers understand that their child needs them to grow to be a good person.

8. Do you recommend Congress implement initiatives or fund programs such as Father Resource Programs.....

Christopher - yes.

Brandon - This problem help me out a whole lot. I know more now then when I came in here.

David - Yes, because we need to change the image of today's young father from negative to positive and we do this through outreach programs like Father Resource. Why not help to build a noble legacy of Fatherhood!

DeMarcus - Yes, Programs like the Father Resource Program helps men find themselves and open new doors of their lives that they were not able to do by themselves. The Father Resource Program does things that other programs will not touch for some men today especially young black men.

Anthony - I believe programs like Father Resource Program can only help.

Brandy - Yes, I believe we need more.

9. Please tell the committee about you and your background as well as your child, your child's mother.

Christopher - I was with my child's mother for a year. Patience came here on May 30th at 6:55 p.m.

Brandon - I have a clean background and I try my best to stay out of trouble and my baby's mother tries to stay out of trouble.

Question Number 9 continued....

David - I grew up in a single parent household without a father. My fiancé has grown up with her mother and step father, her relationship with her father is similar to mine own, they are on speaking term. Our son is four months old and has been living with the both of his parent his entire life.

DeMarcus - The program helped me a lot, it helped me get into college and to find myself. My child is doing fine but I can't hardly see him right now like I want to. As far as my child's mother, we have no friendly relationship, we can't even get along.

Anthony - I only try to be. I know I fall short from time to time.

Brandy - I come from a single mother home. My child's mother has both parents, and children live with her.

10. What makes you a responsible father today?

Christopher - Being able to see myself doing better for me and my child. Looking in his face just motivates me to give and take care of her until I'm not alive anymore. She gets anything until death.

Brandon - Yes, because I know more about being a father and taking on my responsibility.

David - My son.

DeMarcus - I can't see my child to help me be a responsible father like I want to. I'm going to have to get paternity established and visitation ordered before I can start doing for me child.

Anthony - I only try to be. I know I fall short from time to time.

Brandy - I accept responsibility for everything I do for my child and to my child. I do everything in my power to make sure they have a better life than mine.

**Senate Finance Committee
Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy**

FOR THE RECORD

**Hearing on Fatherhood
July 24, 2000**

**Statement of Dionne Hill
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We welcome the opportunity to submit testimony on these important family issues. The testimony aims to highlight a few points that we feel have been overlooked in the language of S 1364. We applaud the Senate's recognition of fatherhood as an important and vital entity in the lives of America's children. However, to ensure that this bill will accomplish its aims, there needs to be greater specificity in the wording of parts of the bill.

As S 1364 recognizes, fathers play a very important part in the lives of their children. As written "children who live without contact with their biological father are, in comparison to children who have such contact, five times more likely to live in poverty, more likely to bring weapons and drugs into the classroom, twice as likely to commit crime, etc." These figures not only reflect the fact that the presence of fathers in the lives of their children decreases absenteeism, involvement also helps to reduce some of the many other social ills that our country is currently facing.

Taking into consideration the findings S 1364 encompasses, we ask that the bill provide means through which these problems may be dealt with. There should be guidelines within the bill that enable connections to be made between a father and his child(ren).

As stated in (H-10) of the bill, there is a social need to reconnect children and fathers. This assertion seems to get lost in the actual titles of the bill. There needs to be greater allowance for this type of reconnect. Public awareness programs are very helpful for general dissemination of information, but if no actual bond is made between children and fathers then the bill's ultimate goals are not met.

We suggest that greater stipulation be added in Sec 469C 4(b)(1). It states that the secretary shall award grants for the purpose of encouraging States to develop and carry out media campaigns "that promote the formation and maintenance of married two-parent families, strengthen fragile families, and promote responsible fatherhood." What exactly does strengthening fragile families and promoting responsible fatherhood entail? A fragile family is not defined anywhere within the bill and will seemingly be left to up to the states discretion as to what constitutes a "fragile" family. Is a fragile family a single parent home with a certain income or one that faces other adversities, such as disabled persons within the home? "Responsible fatherhood" also needs further definition for some may feel that the most important role a father plays is via financial support (which undeniably counters the bill's findings). Responsible fatherhood should have within its definition a stipulation that bolsters the emotional and social needs of children and their fathers. How is responsible fatherhood going to be promoted? What are television commercials and other forms of media going to emphasize? Campaigns are good but initiatives that connect fathers with children are even better. Without further definition, funds could conceivably be diverted to job training programs in the name of "responsible fatherhood" while the emotional needs of the children are never addressed.

Both "fragile families" and "responsible fatherhood" appear frequently throughout the bill but without further clarity on what these terms comprise, there will be a continued disconnect between fathers and children. As the introducing pages of the bill concedes, the absence of fathers in the emotional lives of today's children is having devastating effects on both the child and our country. This is a very important issue and we do not want the funds or the wording of the bill to be manipulated in such a way that it would cause for its potential to be greater than its outcome.

Summary:

The Fatherhood bill is all in all a good bill. Its goals and aims should be commended, but if some of the language is not revised then its ultimate impact may be lost. This bill has the potential to have great affects on the future status of families and children; however, if less vague definitions are not introduced into the bill then it may fall short of its eventual aims. There needs to be greater emphasis on programs that provide for the emotional connects between fathers and their children.

A Statement Issued by Morehouse Center for
on African American Leadership

Turning the Corner on Father Absence In Black America



**Morehouse Research Institute &
Institute for American Values**

This Statement comes from the African American Fathers project, co-sponsored by the Morehouse Research Institute and the Institute for American Values. The institutes are grateful to the Ford Foundation, the Achelis and Bodman Foundations, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation for their generous support. This Statement reflects the views of its signatories and does not necessarily reflect the views of the institutes.

This Statement is dedicated to the memory of Obie Clayton, Sr. (1911 - 1999) and to the memory of all the good fathers who came before and on whose shoulders we stand.

On the cover: The Creation, 1935, by Aaron Douglas. The Howard University Gallery of Art, Permanent Collection, Washington, D.C.

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What Unites Us

Are Black fathers necessary? You know, I'm old and I'm tired, and there are some things that I just don't want to debate anymore. One of them is whether African American children need fathers. Another is whether marriage matters. Does marriage matter? You bet it does. Are Black fathers necessary? Damn straight we are.

WITH THESE words, the Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist William Raspberry struck the key note of a conference on African American fathers held in the fall of 1998 at historic Morehouse College. Mr. Raspberry's words reflect the resounding consensus of the diverse group of scholars, activists, and advocates who journeyed to Atlanta from cities across the United States to focus on the challenge: facing African American fathers and their families on the eve of a new millennium.

WE GATHERED together because of our shared concern about the national trend of father absence that is affecting nearly all races and ethnic groups in the United States, and because of our particular concern about father absence in the African American community.

WE GATHERED together because we believe that among the most urgent problems facing the African American community, and the entire nation, is the reality that 70 percent of African American children are born to unmarried mothers, and that at least 80 percent of all African American children can now expect to spend at least a significant part of their childhood years living apart from their fathers.

WE GATHERED together because of evidence showing that children of all races and ethnic groups who grow up without their fathers in their lives face higher risks of problems that can keep them from leading healthy, caring, and productive lives.

WE GATHERED knowing in our hearts that the estrangement of fathers from their children is wrong, that children need both their fathers and their mothers, and that neither the African American community, nor the nation as a whole, can truly prosper unless and until we reverse the alarming trend of father absence.

WE GATHERED together inspired by the strength, courage, and determination of the countless African American men who are heroic models of responsible fatherhood. We acknowledge the many and varied barriers, including racial discrimination, economic and educational disadvantages, and negative cultural attitudes and influences, that undermine the possibility of responsible fatherhood for many African American men. We are committed to overcoming all of these barriers.

WE are men. Many of us are fathers. We are women. Many of us are mothers. We are sons and we are daughters. We are black and we are white. There are liberals, conservatives,

and independents among us. Some of us work daily on the front lines of the fatherhood movement. Others are a part of efforts aimed at strengthening the institution of marriage. Some of us represent communities of faith. Others come from academia. Some of us are advocates for children and families. Others are community activists.

WE DIFFER in approach and emphasis. But we are united in our belief that fathers are necessary, and that African American children, no less than other children, need and deserve the loving, nurturing, and sustained presence of their fathers in their lives.

WE GATHERED TOGETHER BECAUSE OF OUR COMMITMENT TO ONE OVERARCHING GOAL: WE SEEK TO PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN BY LIFTING THE BURDEN OF FATHER ABSENCE FROM THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY, SO THAT AS MANY CHILDREN AS POSSIBLE WILL ENJOY THE LOVE, NURTURE, PROTECTION, GUIDANCE, AND SUPPORT OF THEIR FATHERS.

THIS IS WHAT UNITES US. THIS IS OUR SHARED MISSION.

A Shared Vision

WE AGREE on the vital importance of fathers as equal partners with mothers in the raising of children.

ALTHOUGH WE differ on the relative weight to be given to economic, cultural, and private and public policy factors in shaping the lives of African American fathers, we agree that each of these factors is at work, and that comprehensive strategies are needed to confront the crisis of father absence in the African American community.

ALTHOUGH WE differ on how to enhance marriage, we do agree that a key goal of the fatherhood movement must be to encourage both enhanced marriageability *and* healthy marriages.

WE AGREE that strategies to promote responsible fatherhood must address the diverse needs of families, including fragile families formed by out-of-wedlock births to disadvantaged parents.

WE AGREE that there are profound spiritual dimensions to this crisis, and that in order to make the way for nurturing relationships between fathers and their children, much healing must be done between fathers and mothers, men and women.

WE AGREE that to address this crisis there is much to be done by the African American community, and much to be done by the larger society, including government.

WE AGREE that inaction by any segment of the larger society cannot excuse inaction by the African American community.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

A Call To Action

WE CALL upon all African American fathers who are not actively and lovingly involved in their children's lives, to turn their hearts toward their little ones, and to work toward healing their relationships with their children and with the mothers of their children.

WE CALL upon the Black church to make the healing and restoration of African American families a major focus of its work, and to take a leadership role in re-uniting fathers and children, and mothers and fathers — wherever possible, through marriage.

WE CALL upon the leaders of all African American civil rights, fraternal, professional, philanthropic, social, and civic organizations to put the issue of re-uniting fathers with their children at the very top of their agendas for at least the next decade, and to forge creative partnerships with the many African American leaders now at the forefront of the fatherhood movement.

WE CALL upon all African American leaders to bring to this movement the same energy and dedication, the same passion and fearlessness, and the same creativity and courage that was summoned to wage the struggle for basic civil rights.

AND WE call upon our national, state, and municipal leaders to put the full weight of government resources at all levels, for at least the next decade, behind partnerships designed to re-unite fathers with their children and to strengthen families.

Why Fathers Matter

FATHER ABSENCE is not a uniquely African American problem. It is an American problem that crosses racial, ethnic, and class lines. All across the United States, fathers are quietly disappearing from the lives of children. For many years, this subtle and growing form of child neglect has been tolerated in communities throughout the country, among rich, poor, and middle class alike, and in nearly every ethnic group. Driven by growing rates of out-of-wedlock births, separation, and divorce, this trend is robbing millions of our nation's children of the spiritual, emotional, and material support of their fathers.

TONIGHT, about four of every ten children in the United States will go to sleep in homes where their fathers do not live. Before they reach the age of eighteen, more than half of America's children are likely to spend at least a significant portion of their childhoods living apart from their fathers.³

GROWING NUMBERS of children in our nation live in family and community environments that might be called "radically fatherless." For example, in 1990, nearly 3 million children — about one of every twenty children in our country — were living in father-absent homes in neighborhoods in which a majority of families with children were headed by single

mothers. About 4.5 million U.S. children that year resided in predominantly fatherless neighborhoods, in which more than half of all families with children were headed by single mothers. Of these 4.5 million at-risk children, nearly 80 percent were African American.

ALTHOUGH THE proportion of children with absent fathers is growing fastest among whites, the problem of father absence is especially acute in the African American community. Of all Black babies born in 1996, approximately 70 percent were born to unmarried mothers. On average, a Black child born in the early 1950s would eventually spend about four years (or about 22 percent of childhood) living in a one-parent home. But for Black children born in the early 1980s, that figure, according to one estimate, would nearly triple, to almost 11 years or about 60 percent of childhood.'

THESE TRENDS pose significant threats to African American children, to the African American community, and to our nation.

THERE IS compelling evidence that children raised by single parents generally do not fare as well as children raised by two married parents. After years of careful study, including analyses of four large national databases, and controlling for race, income, and education, Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur recently concluded that, "The evidence is quite clear: Children who grow up in a household with only one biological parent are worse off, on average, than children who grow up in a household with both of their biological parents, regardless of the parents' race or educational background, regardless of whether the parents are married when the child is born, and regardless of whether the resident parent remarries."⁴

CONTROLLING FOR parental education, occupation, family income, welfare receipt, parenting styles, time spent with children, children's age, gender, and race, Lingxin Hao of Johns Hopkins University finds that "the net effects of non-intact family structure on child development outcomes are negative and strong."

AGAIN, controlling for race, neighborhood characteristics, and mother's education and cognitive ability, boys raised in single parent homes are twice as likely (and boys raised in step-families three times as likely) to commit a crime leading to incarceration.⁵ A child growing up without both parents also faces a greater risk that he or she will be a victim of a crime, especially child abuse.⁶

COMPARED TO children with both parents at home, children who live apart from their fathers are five times as likely to be poor.¹⁰ Children who live apart from their fathers are also much more likely to do poorly in school and twice as likely to drop out of school.

BEYOND THE statistics is the pain of real children — boys and girls, young men and young women, who bear, and often pass on to their own children, the pains of father hunger. There are the boys and young men who, without the protection and guidance of fathers, struggle each day to figure out what it means to be a man, improvising for themselves expedient, and too often violent and self-destructive, codes of manhood.¹¹ There are the little girls and young women who, facing life without the first men who should have loved

them and stayed with them. struggle to develop a sense of their own love-worthiness, often offering sex in exchange for what they hope will be love.

WE CAN no longer afford to deny the vital importance of the father-child bond. Nor can we any longer deny the struggles of Black women raising children without the help of fathers, nor the suffering of Black men living at the margins of family life and society. When fathers are absent, children suffer — one child at a time, one family at a time. And that suffering reverberates throughout our society.

The Global Trend

AS SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT and Cornel West have put it, "Biologically speaking, the link between mother and child is incontrovertible. Fatherhood, in contrast, is inherently uncertain, which is why societies have tried so hard to connect children to their fathers."¹⁴

YET, as many countries have progressed materially and technologically, their commitment to teaching and enforcing the norms that connect children to fathers, and keep the father-child bond intact, has weakened dramatically.¹⁵

THE NEARLY universal understanding of marriage as an indispensable social institution that binds men to their families is breaking down. Marriage has come to be seen less as a way of life meant to guide intimacy and define commitments, especially to children, and more as a vehicle for fulfilling the psychological needs of adults. And in the Western world, from the Scandinavian countries to Canada and the United States, rates of out-of-wedlock births and divorce have skyrocketed.

A DRAMATIC confluence of events, many of which promote individualism more than obligation, has led to an abandonment of the norms that once taught men a sense of responsibility to their children.

NOWADAYS, little stigma is attached to having a child out of wedlock. Divorces are common. With the easy availability of birth control and abortion, and the decline in the practice of "shotgun" marriages, sexual behavior is no longer inextricably linked with child-bearing and marriage. With the large scale entry of women into the workforce and women's increasing independence, as well as economic changes that have meant stagnating wages and growing economic insecurity for many men, the male's role as provider has become less significant. Perhaps most importantly, with these changes has come a devaluing of the role of fathers: a growing sense that fathers are not as important, not as necessary, as mothers.

FOR THESE REASONS, fatherhood as an institution is disintegrating in many modern societies. The set of social expectations, codes, and laws that once kept most fathers connected to their families are loosening, and fathers the world over, rich and poor alike, are increasingly disengaging from their children and from the mothers of their children.

Challenges To African American Fatherhood

ECONOMIC, cultural, and policy changes that have devalued fatherhood in the West in general and in the United States in particular, have hit the African American community especially hard. For example, as the Harvard sociologist (and participant in the Morehouse Conference) William Julius Wilson and others have pointed out, basic structural changes in the U.S. economy have increasingly disadvantaged lower-skilled workers, thus undermining the marriageability of many young African American men.

"FOR THE first time in the 20th century," notes Wilson, "most adult males in many inner city-ghetto neighborhoods are not working in a typical week. The disappearance of work has adversely affected not only individuals, families, and neighborhoods, but the social life of the city at large as well." Furthermore, "The problems of joblessness and social dislocation in the inner city are, in part, related to the processes in the global economy that have contributed to greater inequality and insecurity among American workers in general, and of the failure of U.S. social policies to adjust these processes."¹⁴

FOR AFRICAN American men, moreover, the effects of these global trends are exacerbated by a series of racially specific historical events that began with slavery and include the legacies of slavery, as well as the racism and economic discrimination that are an intrinsic part of American society and the African American experience.

THE LEGACY of slavery is tragically relevant to the issue of Black fatherhood, for the conditions of slavery in the United States provided exactly the opposite of what is required in order to preserve the fragile bond between father and child. By law, the male slave could fulfill none of the duties of husband and father. The institution of slavery created a subculture where all the societal norms, mores, expectations, and laws, instead of helping to connect men to their offspring, forcibly severed the bonds between fathers and their children.

The Great Upheaval

THIS LEGACY makes all the more heroic the many Black men throughout American history who, with so many forces arrayed against them, stood tall to fulfill their responsibilities as fathers.

EVEN IN the face of concerted and persistent discrimination, including economic discrimination, and the harsh inequalities of Jim Crow, many Black families maintained two-parent households well into the 1960s, when rates of out-of-wedlock births began to escalate dramatically. In 1960, 22 percent of all Black babies were born to unmarried mothers. By 1996, that figure had jumped to 70 percent.

MANY FACTORS contributed to this dramatic change. The 1960s ushered in great social, cultural, and economic upheavals that had a profound impact on fatherhood in the United States generally and among African Americans particularly. Shifting occupational structures (from manufacturing to services), stagnating real wages, and the declining relative demand for low-skilled labor undermined the economic status of many Black men. Welfare policies that focused on helping mothers and children, to the exclusion of fathers, had the practical effect of keeping or driving men out of the home and away from children. Housing discrimination that facilitated the movement of whites out of the cities while hampering the mobility of African Americans, the increasing suburbanization of employment, inadequate urban school systems, and the growing incarceration of Black men, fueled in large measure by the war on drugs, also played crucial roles in undercutting opportunities for many Black men.

IN 1960, there were 70 employed civilian Black men for every hundred Black women. But by 1990, the figure had dropped to 40.¹⁷ Between the 1960s and 1990s, the percent of Black female-headed households rose dramatically as Black male unemployment and underemployment also increased. In the absence of genuine opportunities, and in the face of persistent poverty, more and more young Black males dropped out of both the labor force and family life.¹⁸ All of these trends, moreover, occurred within the context of a growing societal belief that fathers, when all is said and done, are non-essential.

THE INSTITUTION of fatherhood is sensitive to social, economic, cultural and policy changes. African American fatherhood is especially sensitive to such changes because it never had the full support of American society. As the value of fatherhood has declined in the larger American culture, and social and economic conditions have grown more unfavorable for many fathers, the bonds holding many African American families together have frayed severely, separating more and more fathers from their children.

Culture, Economics, and Policy

WE BELIEVE that the fatherhood movement within the African American community must include *both* aggressive steps to improve public and private sector policies as they affect fathers and to open up greater economic opportunities for African American men, and equally aggressive steps to promote changes in norms and expectations that support marriage and strengthen the father-child bond.

SOME OF us see the principal cause of father absence among African Americans as the lack of adequate economic opportunities. We argue that the economic conditions affecting a great number of African American men make it nearly impossible for them to be adequate providers, and that this inability to provide is the root cause of father absence for African American children. We are encouraged by a recent study from the National Bureau of Economic Research showing a positive link between greater employment opportunities for young Black men and declining crime rates. These and similar findings support arguments

advanced by William Julius Wilson, John Sibley Butler of the University of Texas (a participant in the Morehouse Conference), and others suggesting that young African American men "would benefit especially from consistent and full employment." "We argue in favor of government and private sector action that creates jobs, provides social services and job training, and facilitates access to places of work, all of which would enhance the marriageability of Black men.

OTHERS OF us believe that the problem of father absence in the African American community cannot be explained solely or even primarily by reference to economic structures, especially given the high and growing rates of father absence outside of the ranks of the African American community and outside the ranks of the poor. We believe that father absence in the Black community is caused in large part by damaging and historically rooted cultural patterns that promote behaviors leading to high rates of out of wedlock births, low rates of marriage, and conflictual relationships between Black men and Black women. We argue for cultural changes within the community and in the larger society that would encourage personal responsibility and healthy marriages and discourage out-of-wedlock births and divorce.

DESPITE OUR differences, as a group we agree that it is difficult to disentangle cultural values from the effects of economics and policy. We agree that the forces driving father absence in the African American community are complex and mutually reinforcing, and that economics and cultural values, as well as public and private sector policies, play key roles in the crisis of father absence in the African American community.

AS WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON recently noted, "In the inner-city ghetto, not only have the norms in support of husband-wife families and against out-of-wedlock births become weaker as a result of the general trend in society, they have also gradually disintegrated because of the sharp rise in joblessness and declining real incomes in the inner city over the past several decades, especially from the mid 1970s to 1995. The weakening of social sanctions has had the greatest impact on the jobless, but it has also affected many who are employed, especially those whose jobs are not very secure or stable and/or those who are experiencing declining real incomes. The declining marriage rates among inner-city Black parents is a function not simply of increased economic marginality, or of changing attitudes toward sex and marriage, but of the interaction between the two."²³ This point is also reinforced by Elijah Anderson of the University of Pennsylvania (a participant in the Morehouse Conference) and author of *Code of the Streets*, who notes that very few young men in the inner city have the opportunity to see older men in their neighborhood going to work and building strong families. According to Anderson, when "a critical mass of jobless people are concentrated in the inner city community, various factors come together and conspire to produce an almost intractable result. In these circumstances alienation thrives and little that is conventional retains legitimacy."²⁴

CULTURAL VALUES, economics, and public policy are never entirely distinct realms. They are inextricably linked aspects of the human experience. Public and private policies can

At right, Aspects of Negro Life: From Slavery Through Reconstruction, detail 1934, by Aaron Douglas. Oil on canvas, 60 x 139". The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Art & Artifacts Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.



encourage or discourage behavior. The economy is influenced by — and promotes — certain cultural values. People's lives are partly shaped by the economic conditions and circumstances in which they find themselves. Economic conditions can uplift — or debase — people and the communities in which they live. But it is equally true that people's values can help them respond to those conditions in ways that are either self-defeating or self-empowering.

WE BELIEVE that we must address, with equal force, *all* the factors that would keep fathers from building caring and nurturing relationships with their children.

STRATEGIES FOR action must address economic and private and public policy factors that particularly affect the Black community. They must also address cultural shifts affecting the United States in general, and the cultural and behavioral patterns that affect the African American community in particular.

Marriage and Marriageability

IN NEARLY every culture, marriage has been the main institution which binds men to their families. Through the institution of marriage, societies have legitimized the masculine role, connected men to women and to future generations, and held men accountable to their children and to their family responsibilities.

WHEN MARRIAGE fails or fails to form, when mothers and fathers do not commit to one another, nurturing fatherhood typically dwindles away. Over time, unmarried and divorced fathers tend to disengage from their children — both emotionally and financially. This is true for fathers of all races and classes. Although one study suggests that unmarried Black fathers are more likely to spend time with their children than are unwed white and Hispanic fathers, the evidence is quite strong that over time single fathers of all races tend to separate from their children and families, and that marriage significantly increases the likelihood that a child will grow up being nurtured by his or her father.²²

WE BELIEVE that a key goal of the fatherhood movement within the African American community must be strengthened relationships between mothers and fathers that lead, wherever possible, to strong, healthy marriages. We believe also that strategies to promote fatherhood must take into account the diverse conditions of contemporary father absence, strengthening the father-child bond at all stages of a relationship between a father and a mother. As a group, we believe that the fatherhood movement must promote both marriage *and* marriageability.

SOME OF us see father absence in the African American community as rooted mainly in norms and behavior patterns that devalue marriage, weaken the male-female bond, and tolerate high rates of out-of-wedlock births and divorce. We argue that we cannot rebuild fatherhood outside of marriage and that marriage must be the primary line of defense in

the struggle to re-unite fathers and children. We believe that efforts to reverse the trend of father absence in the African American community must focus on increasing dramatically the proportion of children living with their two parents, committed to one another in marriage.

FROM THIS perspective, moreover, marriage itself promotes economic achievement in men. Some studies suggest that marriage alone increases men's earnings. Husbands, in general, earn at least ten percent more than similar single men, and in some cases married men earn as much as 40 percent more. Accordingly, marriage should be promoted as a social institution that not only maximizes emotional benefits, but also one that by itself can have a substantial positive effect on the economic condition of fathers and families.²²

SOME OF us take the position that marriage cannot be the first line of defense for promoting responsible fatherhood in the African American community. We argue that poor employment prospects make Black men less marriageable and that low marriage rates are largely a consequence of limited economic opportunities. As William Julius Wilson has pointed out, employed single Black fathers ages 18-31 in Chicago's inner city neighborhoods are eight times more likely to marry eventually than their jobless counterparts.²³ Because Black men have lower employment rates and lower earnings than white men, they are less able to provide for a family and therefore less likely to be able to marry. In addition, educational differences between Black men and Black women, along with Black women's comparatively improved employment prospects and earnings, make Black women less dependent on the earnings of men, giving them more freedom in the choice of whether or not to marry.

FOR SOME of us, then, promotion of a "marriage first" strategy fails to take account of the decreased marriageability of Black men. It also discounts the suffering of many mothers and children who have lived through abusive marriages, and pays insufficient attention to other practical realities that make marriage the wrong answer for many couples. We do not condone childbirth outside of marriage. But we support strategies that take into account the current reality of high rates of non-marital births. We argue that families must be nurtured and strengthened as we find them. For example, until recently, it was assumed that in most cases children born outside of marriage are born to couples in which the father is essentially absent. But a recent study shows that nearly half of poor children born out of wedlock are born to cohabiting couples or to couples where the father visits the child weekly. Accordingly, many of these fathers are not absent from their children's lives, yet our national policies assume that they are absent and make few attempts to strengthen the attachment of these fathers to their children and to the mothers of their children.²⁴

DESPITE OUR different points of view, as a group we strongly favor efforts to strengthen relationships between parents in ways that help fathers connect to their children. One

important goal of these efforts is to help move as many unmarried couples as possible toward healthy, nurturing marriages. We are therefore in agreement that a loving marriage, founded on principles of equal regard between husband and wife, is the ideal way to raise children, and that African American children no less than other children deserve the care of their two married parents.

MARRIAGE IS already an important, though frequently unrealized, goal for many young, low-income African Americans. One recent study of fragile families — parents who are young, poor and unwed — finds that about half of these parents are living together at the time of the birth of their child. The great majority say they are romantically involved. More than half say that either it is "almost certain" that they will get married or that there is a "good chance" that they will get married.²⁴ We must build upon this foundation. We should not ignore or destroy this natural human desire for intimacy and a stable family life, but instead do everything we can to nourish and support it.

AS A GROUP, we support a "marriage matters" and "marriage wherever possible" set of strategies. We believe that marriage should be held up as the preferred way to raise children and that fatherhood programs, wherever possible, should promote the benefits of marriage and help fathers and mothers move toward stable, nurturing marriages. Strong marriages are connected to cultural values as well as economics and policy. For example, men's sense of personal worth as well as their sense of value to their families are tied in powerful ways to their role as breadwinners — their ability to provide materially for their children. For this reason, increased economic opportunities for African American men must be a part of any movement that seeks to reunite fathers and children and promote marriage.

BUT MARRIAGE and marriageability are also deeply connected to the quality of the relationships between adult males and females.

MUCH HAS been written in popular fiction and non-fiction about the state of gender relations between Black men and Black women.²⁵ Recent demographic data and social survey data reveal wide gaps in the socio-economic conditions, and also in the basic attitudes and behavior patterns separating Black men from Black women.²⁶ Ethnographic data analyzed by William Julius Wilson reveal that "the relationships between inner-city black men and women, whether in a marital or non-marital situation, are often fractious and antagonistic."²⁷ The conclusion is inescapable: there is a crisis in gender relations in the Black community. This is a painful reality. But acknowledging the crisis points to a vital strategy for reversing the trend of father absence. We believe that efforts to promote fatherhood and marriage in the African American community must include urgent and concerted work aimed at gender reconciliation: the healing of relationships between men and women.

The Spiritual Dimensions of Father Absence in Black America

THERE ARE profound spiritual aspects to the problem of father absence in the African American community. It is tied to a spiritual brokenness that is, in turn, linked to economic, political, cultural, and social patterns that are partly rooted in slavery and continuing adversities.

THE INSTITUTION of slavery stripped African American fatherhood of much of its sacred character. Continuing racism, economic discrimination, and public and private sector policies that have divided families have adversely affected relationships between Black men and Black women. These painful influences have adversely affected the raising of Black children. They have harmed marriages and thwarted the formation of families. It is time now to take the time to recover, as fully as possible, what has been lost.

IN THE words of the Reverend Frederick J. Streets, Chaplain of Yale University, "We need a kind of excavation of our spiritual and emotional troubles for the purpose of dealing with them creatively and releasing us from the power they have to influence our behavior, both on the conscious and the unconscious levels."²

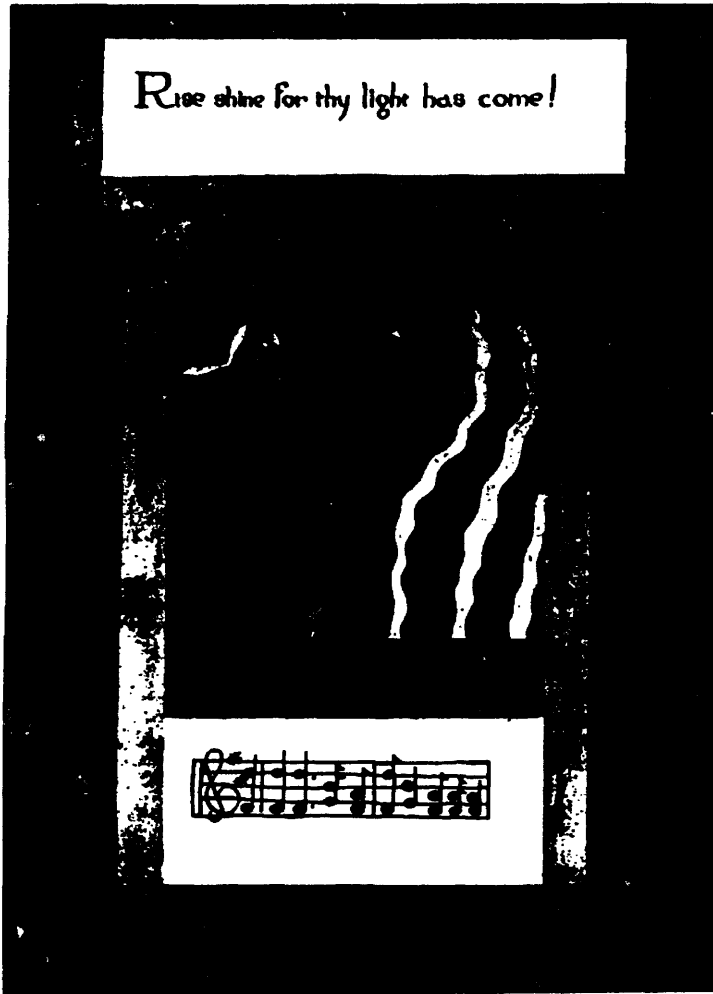
DR. BERNARD FRANKLIN, Vice President of the National Fathering Center (and a participant in the Morehouse Conference) notes that, "Part of the untold story is that the brutal pain injected by slavery has gone unforgiven in the lives of many African American men . . . Carrying around bitterness and anger is like carrying a sack of cement. It weighs men down and makes their journey exasperating. They are left with no energy for parenting and for caring for their families . . . Thus the bitter root of judgment has become so ingrained in many families that men who are born into these families become alcoholic, lethargic, unable or unwilling to support their wives, violent, and, generally, men without hope. Far more descends through our physical inheritance than we suspect."³

SINCE THE arrival of the first Africans on these shores, African Americans have been called upon in their time and place to make a way out of no way. The Black community has the highest measurable level of religiosity of any group in the United States.⁴ What has made the difference in every generation and what will make the difference now on the eve of the 21st century is the community's faith in God.

THE CRISIS of father absence poses a profound challenge to the Black church. The church's challenge is to rise to this most vital mission of helping the African American community to heal through ministries of forgiveness and reconciliation.

AND BECAUSE the church is affected by the same forces affecting all African Americans, it, too, must take time to heal, even as it goes forth to help heal others.

THE STRUGGLE for inward renewal within the African American community has been postponed for too long. It is time to enter a new century on a path to wholeness, for the sake of our children.



*As left: Rise Shine for
Thy Light Has Come
c. 1930, by Aaron
Douglas, Gouache on
paper, 12" x 9" The
Howard University
Gallery of Art,
Washington, D.C.*

Ten Recommendations

REVERSING THE trend of father absence both nationally and among African Americans in particular will require long-term efforts aimed at all the political, economic, social and cultural forces that are separating fathers from their children.

1. WE URGE AFRICAN AMERICAN FATHERS AND MOTHERS TO RECOGNIZE THEIR OBLIGATIONS TO EACH OTHER AND TO WORK TO BUILD STRONGER PARENTING PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THEIR CHILDREN. We applaud all fathers who play active and loving roles in the lives of their children, and we encourage them to serve as mentors to other fathers and to young men. To fathers who are not now actively involved in nurturing their children, we urge you to become a part of one of the growing number of programs focused on re-uniting fathers and children and on improving relationships between fathers and mothers. We especially hope that older African American fathers, who by virtue of their dedication can serve as models of responsible fatherhood, will call on and help younger African American men to reject what Elijah Anderson terms the "code of the street," and to embrace responsibility to self, family, and community. As Anderson reminds us, "The old heads are the saving grace of the community . . . by telling people to be responsible, they are affirming that something can be done, that there is hope for the future."

WE URGE MOTHERS TO BE OPEN TO BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS THAT ENABLE FATHERS TO ESTABLISH STRONG, LOVING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR CHILDREN. For too long, there has been a widespread assumption that if fathers do not provide financially for their children, there is little else that they can do. Children need their fathers as nurturers and protectors as well. Sometimes, mothers who are estranged from the fathers of their children will say or do things that, intentionally or not, alienate children from their fathers. This behavior can not only damage children's relationships with their father, but also damage their emotional development and their abilities to form healthy relationships with others.

2. WE URGE THE BLACK CHURCH TO HELP BUILD A POWERFUL NEW MOVEMENT AIMED AT GENDER AND FAMILY HEALING. This movement should include the following aspects: initiatives designed to improve the quality of relationships between Black men and Black women; programs aimed at preparing men and women for marriage, including helping men and women to deal with their relationships with their own families of origin; programs aimed at improving relationships between parents and children; rites of passage programs that challenge the code of the street by preparing young men and young women for responsible manhood and womanhood, and responsible motherhood and fatherhood; and ministries aimed at helping incarcerated fathers reunite and establish healthy relationships with their children. We urge the Black church to work in partnership with other communities of faith and with organizations at the forefront of the fatherhood movement, and to collaborate with colleges, universities, public health agencies, and mental health agencies for the promotion of family health and well-being.

3. WE URGE CHURCHES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT FAMILIES BY TAKING A MUCH MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE EDUCATION OF BLACK CHILDREN THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY-BASED AND VALUES-ORIENTED EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS. The larger society should encourage these initiatives by supporting charter school legislation, increasing scholarship fund assistance for alternative schools, and, where feasible, providing vouchers so that needy parents can send their children to any public school, regardless of location.

4. WE URGE CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL, CIVIC, FRATERNAL AND PHILANTHROPIC GROUPS WITHIN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY TO MAKE THE ISSUE OF RE-UNITING FATHERS AND CHILDREN A TOP PRIORITY FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT DECADE THROUGH PROGRAMS OF ADVOCACY, FAMILY RECONCILIATION, AND COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION. We call upon these organizations to work in partnership with leaders of the fatherhood movement and the Black church to build a critical mass of community-based programs aimed at strengthening Black families, with special emphasis on improving relationships between men and women, and between parents and children.

5. WE URGE ALL MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS, ESPECIALLY BLACK MEDIA, TO USE THEIR POWER FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT DECADE TO PROMOTE POSITIVE IMAGES OF MEN AND FATHERHOOD IN BLACK AMERICA. The media does influence behavior, for better or for worse. We urge all media outlets, particularly those serving the Black community, to use their creative talents to develop programs and public service campaigns that promote the ideals of responsible fatherhood and motherhood, strong marriages, and healthy family life.

6. WE CALL UPON THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO PASS, AND THE PRESIDENT TO SIGN, LEGISLATION THIS FISCAL YEAR AUTHORIZING AT LEAST \$2 BILLION OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY-BASED FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS AIMED AT REVERSING THE TREND OF FATHER ABSENCE IN OUR NATION. These programs should focus on three objectives. First, increasing the attachment of fathers to their children. Second, increasing the spiritual, educational, social, and economic contributions that fathers make to their children. And third, fostering both marriage and marriageability, especially for young, poorly educated, low-income men. We particularly urge support for programs that emphasize the development of the "whole man," combining an intensive focus on economic and social opportunity, including access to social services, employment readiness skills, job training, and job placement, with an equally intensive focus on values and attitudes, including spiritual development, the importance of the marriage commitment, and the importance of good parenting habits and skills for both custodial and non-custodial fathers. Both the Clinton/Gore Administration and leading members of Congress from both parties have expressed initial support for this type of federal initiative. We urge them to act now.

7. WE CALL UPON THE FEDERAL-STATE CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM TO INSTITUTE BASIC REFORMS TO ENCOURAGE FATHERS' ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE LIVES OF THEIR CHILDREN BY PROMOTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY FOR FATHERS, ENCOURAGING MARRIAGE, AND ENGAGING FAITH-BASED AND OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD.

- We urge the federal-state Child Support Enforcement Program to reexamine its policies toward low-income non-custodial parents with respect to the size of initial orders, arrearage policies, and modification of orders when earnings of the non-custodial parent change. Most importantly, the program should seek to insure that child support payments primarily benefit the children, and are not solely used to reimburse government for welfare costs.

- We urge the federal-state Child Support Enforcement Program, operating under revised federal guidelines, to create a number of experimental or demonstration projects in which child support enforcement becomes an active partner with the fatherhood movement. Specifically, under this arrangement, child support enforcement agencies could choose, on a case by case basis, and drawing on lessons learned from programs such as Parents Fair Share and Children First, to permit delinquent fathers to participate in community-based fatherhood programs as an alternative to incarceration or other punitive measures. These pilot projects would help today's fatherhood movement to reach out to those fathers who are willing to commit themselves to straightening out their lives, paying child support, respecting and working with the mothers of their children, and their children. In this way, for the first time, the child support enforcement program could become an ally of the fatherhood movement.

8. WE URGE GOVERNMENT AT ALL LEVELS, THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, AND THE ENTIRE CIVIL SOCIETY TO TAKE CONCERTED ACTION FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT DECADE TO REVERSE INEQUITIES IN THE TREATMENT OF FATHERS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR POLICY AND TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC PROSPECTS AND MARRIAGEABILITY OF POOR MEN, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES:

- Reforming the Earned Income Tax Credit to eliminate its substantial marriage penalty.
- Allowing more fathers, including unmarried fathers paying child support and spending time with their children, to receive the Earned Income Tax Credit, structuring any reforms so that they do not weaken incentives to marriage.
- Reforming federal laws to allow states to extend child care and medical benefits for transitions off welfare through marriage as well as through work.
- Reforming housing policies to promote family formation, for example, by developing pilot projects within public housing to allow fathers of welfare families to live in public housing with their families without a rental surcharge for up to 18 months.
- Increased public and private sector support to develop employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in urban areas.
- Increased public and private sector support for job training, job skills development, and transportation to jobs in suburban areas.
- Greater economic development opportunities in urban areas through private investment.

9. WE URGE THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP CREATIVE STRATEGIES AIMED AT RECONNECTING FATHERS AND CHILDREN WHERE THERE IS A DESIRE TO DO SO ON THE PART OF FAMILY MEMBERS. Although African Americans comprise 12 percent of the U. S. population, they account for nearly 30 percent of arrests and over half of all prisoners. Today, about 5 million men — a group of men who are "majority minority" — are at least partly under the control of the criminal justice system, either due to incarceration or as a result of being on parole. Many of these men are fathers. By definition, they are absent fathers. On any given day, there are in our nation approximately 1,300,000 minor sons and daughters of incarcerated men. These children are especially at risk.³⁴ To help stop what in too many cases becomes a generational cycle of involvement with the criminal justice system, special efforts should be made to reconnect these children to their fathers whenever possible.

10. WE URGE EVERY GOVERNMENTAL OR COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM THAT HAS A RELATIONSHIP WITH UNWED PARENTS TO HELP CONNECT INTERESTED PARENTS WITH FAITH-BASED MARRIAGE EDUCATION AND MARRIAGE MENTORING PROGRAMS. Why? Because marriage matters and because we know that many young people want to marry but need support in order to build healthy marriages and families. ■

*At right Building More
Stately Mansions. 1944.
by Aaron Douglas. Oil
on canvas. 34 x 42".
Collection of Fish
University, Nashville,
Tennessee.*



Endnotes

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2. For a definition of fragile families see, Ronald B. Miney and Hillard Pouncey, "There Must Be 50 Ways to Start a Family," in Wade F. Horn, David Blankenhorn, and Mitchell B. Pearlstein, *The Fatherhood Movement: A Call to Action*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999), pps. 83-104.
3. David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*, (New York, Basic Books, 1995) pps. 1, 18-19; See also Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur, *Growing Up With A Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), pps. 2, 3.
4. *Kids Count Data Book: 1995* (Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1995).
- p. 5. The figure on the proportion of these at-risk children who are African American was provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.
5. Hofferth, *op. cit.*
6. McLanahan and Sandefur, p. 1. Until fairly recently, some scholars have argued that what appear in some studies to be the negative effects of father absence are in fact more likely to be the negative effects of other, presumably more potent variables, such as low income, racism, or neighborhood conditions. But today, a large and growing body of careful scholarly research — complete with "controls" for a wide variety of factors, including race, income, residential instability, urban location, parents' education, the child's cognitive ability, child support payments, and others — is showing as clearly as the social sciences can show anything that father absence itself is a leading cause of harmful outcomes for children in all dimensions of their lives. Urie Bronfenbrenner, one of the nation's most respected family scholars, briefly sums up the weight of scholarly evidence by stating that, "controlling for associated factors such as low income, children growing up in such [father-absent] households are at greater risk for experiencing a variety of behavioral and educational problems, including extremes of hyperactivity or withdrawal, lack of attentiveness in the classroom, difficulty in deferring gratification, impaired academic achievement, school misbehavior, absenteeism, dropping out, involvement in socially alienated peer groups, and, especially, the so-called 'teenage syndrome' of behaviors that tend to hang together — smoking, drinking, early and frequent sexual experience, a cynical attitude toward work, adolescent pregnancy, and, in the more extreme cases, drugs, suicide, vandalism, violence, and criminal acts." See Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Discovering What Families Do," in David Blankenhorn, Steven Bayme, and Jean Bethke Elshstain (eds.), *Rebuilding the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family* (Milwaukee: Family Service America, 1990), p. 34. For a similar overview, see Ronald J. Angel and Jacqueline L. Angel, *Painful Inheritance: Health and the New Generation of Fatherless Children* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), p. 118. *passim*.
7. Lingxin Hao, "Family Structure, Parental Input, and Child Development." Paper presented to the Population Association of America (March 1997): 27-28.

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29. Wilson, "Fatherhood and Welfare Reform."
30. Telephone interview with Rev. Dr. Frederick J. Streets, May 6, 1999.
31. E. Bernard Franklin, "Fatherhood in the African American Church," in Don E. Eberly (ed.), *The Faith Factor in Fatherhood*, (Lanham, MD: Rappaport, Littlefield, forthcoming).
32. See Robert Joseph Taylor, Linda M. Chatters, Rukmalie Jayakody and Jeffrey S. Levin, "Black and White Differences in Religious Participation: A Multi-Sample Comparison," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35 (1996): 403-410; Wade C. Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: It's Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987).
33. Anderson, *Code of the Streets*, p. 324.
34. Telephone interview with Dr. John DiIulio, May 9, 1999. See also, "Families of Adult Prisoners," in *Prison Fellowship Bulletin*, December 1993.

Signatories

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About Aaron Douglas

THIS STATEMENT features the paintings and illustrations of Aaron Douglas (1899-1978), the visual artist most closely identified with the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. Douglas' illustrations appeared in *The Crisis* (published by the NAACP), *Opportunity* (published by the Urban League), *Harper's*, *Vanity Fair*, *Theater Arts Monthly*, and other publications. Probably his most important black-and-white work appeared in *God's Tramboneer*, James Weldon Johnson's 1925 book of poetry based on seven African American sermons. Douglas also illustrated the work of W.E.B. DuBois, Countee Cullen, Paul Morand, Alain Locke, and Langston Hughes. He served as the first president of the Harlem Artists Guild.

DOUGLAS' PAINTINGS are currently exhibited at The Howard University Gallery of Art, the Hampton University Art Museum, and the Museum of Art at Fisk University, where Douglas taught painting from 1937 until his retirement in 1966, as well as in several private collections and other locations. Murals by Douglas were commissioned by the Club Ebony in Harlem, the Harlem YMCA, and Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina. Probably his most celebrated achievement in painting is *Aspects of Negro Life*, a series of four murals completed in 1934 for the Countee Cullen Branch of the New York Public Library on 135th Street in Harlem, now the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

MUCH OF Douglas' work fuses aspects of early 20th-century modernism, especially Cubism and the paintings of Matisse and the post-Impressionists, with the stark forms and restrained tones of African sculpture. Almost all of his work communicates a strong spirituality joined to a complete lack of sentimentality.



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS



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Honorable Members
J. THOMAS JOCHIMAK

Dear Member:

The United States Conference of Mayors, assembled in Seattle, is gravely concerned about the future of the Welfare-to-Work Program. We urge you to extend the Welfare-to-Work program as proposed in the Clinton FY2001 budget. Without the extension of the Welfare-to-Work program, welfare reform will be dealt a serious set back in our nation's cities which are home to the highest concentrations of people still on welfare.

Mayors are aware that some members of Congress have legitimately raised concerns about the low expenditure rate in the current Welfare-to-Work program. Unfortunately, a large percentage of the funding did not reach the local level until the last quarter of 1998. In addition, the initial Welfare-to-Work eligibility requirements have excluded a large segment of the hardest-to-serve welfare population and thus inhibited the expenditure of the first \$3 billion in funding.

We were pleased that Congress made the necessary changes in the eligibility requirements in the FY 2000 appropriations bill. However, these eligibility changes were not effective immediately. The changes are not effective for WTW formula grant funds until October 1, 2000. For WTW competitive grant funds, the changes became effective January 1, 2000.


We believe that the need for the extension of this funding will become increasingly evident as the program becomes fully operational and the eligibility changes are enacted. In fact, indications from the U.S. Department of Labor's quarterly reports on WTW spending are that expenditures for formula and competitive grant funding have increased overall and that expenditures for competitive grant funding has increased significantly since January 1, 2000, when the eligibility changes became effective. It is also expected that spend-out rates will also increase significantly as larger numbers of TANF recipients reach their time limits and lose eligibility for cash assistance.

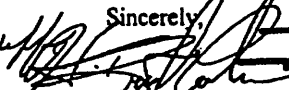
Mayors more than anyone else recognize that although welfare roles have declined significantly across states, great numbers of former welfare clients living in cities who are in need of services still remain. Many of these individuals who are still not working have little or no skills, are unable to read and write beyond the 8th grade level, and have no work experience. When they are able to go to work, the jobs often pay below minimum wage, have no health benefits and are insufficient to support the individual, let alone his or her family.

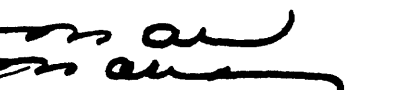
As Mayors we realize that while many in the nation believe the job of welfare reform is complete, we know that much work remains to be done. The targeted and direct resources provided by Welfare-to-Work are essential for us to address the concentrated welfare caseloads in our cities and ensure that those still on welfare make the transition into the workforce. Discontinuing the Welfare to Work program at this time would be a great disservice to those welfare recipients still unable to find self-sustaining jobs.

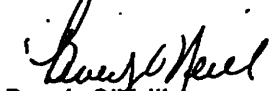
The U.S. Conference of Mayors urges you to extend the Welfare-to-Work program until we can honestly say that most of those in need of these services are working in permanent, self-sustaining jobs. Now is not the time to stop the progress already made on Welfare Reform and Welfare-to-Work. Now is the time to ensure that those remaining on the welfare rolls who have the greatest challenges to employment are served.

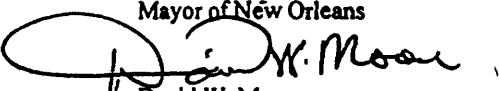
Sincerely,


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Vice President
Mayor of Boise


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