

# FATHERHOOD

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

APRIL 27, 1999

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## **FATHERHOOD**

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**TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 1999**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:04 p.m., in room B-318, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Nancy L. Johnson (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

[The advisory announcing the hearing follows:]

# *ADVISORY*

FROM THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

## **SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: (202) 225-1025

April 20, 1999

No. HR-5

### **Johnson Announces Hearing on Fatherhood**

Congresswoman Nancy L. Johnson (R-CT), Chairman, Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means, today announced that the Subcommittee will hold a hearing on fatherhood. The hearing will take place on Tuesday, April 27, 1999, in room B-318 of the Rayburn House Office Building, beginning at 2 p.m.

Oral testimony at this hearing will be from invited witnesses only. Witnesses will include representatives from the Administration, researchers, program administrators, and advocacy groups. However, any individual or organization not scheduled for an oral appearance may submit a written statement for consideration by the Committee and for inclusion in the printed record of the hearing.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Numerous studies suggest that unmarried fathers tend to have lower levels of education and income as well as elevated rates of unemployment and incarceration as compared with other fathers. These problems make it difficult for them to marry and to play a positive role in the rearing of their children. Studies also show that the consequence of father absence is that children, especially boys, are at risk for developing the same problems that afflict their fathers, thus creating an intergenerational cycle of school failure, delinquency and crime, unemployment, and nonmarital childbirths and child rearing.

Expert witnesses have been invited to discuss what research tells us about the economic and social circumstances of unmarried fathers as well as the effects of programs designed to help these fathers improve their economic status and improve their relationships with the children and their children's mothers.

Members of the Subcommittee introduced fatherhood legislation, H.R. 3314, the "Fathers Count Act of 1998" last year, but it was not acted on by the Committee. This hearing is the first step in renewing that effort.

In announcing the hearing, Chairman Johnson stated: "The 1996 welfare reform law has been very successful in helping poor mothers get jobs and improve their economic circumstances. The next logical step in reforming welfare is to help poor fathers improve their economic circumstances and participate directly in the rearing of their children. We are holding this hearing to learn about new research on the relationship between these young men and women and the prospects that they can form two-parent families or at a minimum, work together to rear their children. Our Subcommittee is especially interested in learning about programs that are now attempting to work directly with fathers to achieve these goals.

#### **FOCUS OF THE HEARING:**

The purpose of this hearing is to continue the Subcommittee's examination of the difficulties faced by unmarried fathers of children on welfare. The hearing will focus

on two issues. First, the Subcommittee will hear about new research on the outcomes of programs for low-income fathers as well as research on the relationship between poor mothers and fathers who have children outside marriage. Second, the Subcommittee will hear about programs, including the Welfare-to-Work program authorized under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, that are now being conducted in inner city areas by community-based organizations to help unmarried fathers improve their economic status and to promote marriage.

**DETAILS FOR SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS:**

Any person or organization wishing to submit a written statement for the printed record of the hearing should submit at least six (6) single-spaced copies of their statement, along with an IBM compatible 3.5-inch diskette in WordPerfect 5.1 format, with their name, address, and hearing date noted on a label, by the close of business, Tuesday, May 11, 1999, to A.L. Singleton, Chief of Staff, Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, 1102 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515. If those filing written statements wish to have their statements distributed to the press and interested public at the hearing, they may deliver 200 additional copies for this purpose to the Subcommittee on Human Resources office, room B-317 Rayburn House Office Building, by close of business the day before the hearing.

**FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS:**

Each statement presented for printing to the Committee by a witness, any written statement or exhibit submitted for the printed record or any written comments in response to a request for written comments must conform to the guidelines listed below. Any statement or exhibit not in compliance with these guidelines will not be printed, but will be maintained in the Committee files for review and use by the Committee.

1. All statements and any accompanying exhibits for printing must be submitted on an IBM compatible 3.5-inch diskette WordPerfect 5.1 format, type in single space and may not exceed a total of 10 pages including attachments. Witnesses are advised that the Committee will rely on electronic submissions for printing the official hearing record.

2. Copies of whole documents submitted as exhibit material will not be accepted for printing. Instead, exhibit material should be referenced and quoted or paraphrased. All exhibit material not meeting these specifications will be maintained in the Committee files for review and use by the Committee.

3. A witness appearing at a public hearing, or submitting a statement for the record of a public hearing, or submitting written comments in response to a published request for comments by the Committee, must include on his statement or submission a list of all clients, persons, or organizations on whose behalf the witness appears.

4. A supplemental sheet must accompany each statement listing the name, company, address, telephone and fax numbers where the witness or the designated representative may be reached. This supplemental sheet will not be included in the printed record.

The above restrictions and limitations apply only to material being submitted for printing. Statements and exhibits or supplementary material submitted solely for distribution to the Members, the press and the public during the course of a public hearing may be submitted in other forms.

Note: All Committee advisories and news releases are available on the World Wide Web at '[http://WWW.HOUSE.GOV/WAYS\\_MEANS/](http://WWW.HOUSE.GOV/WAYS_MEANS/)'.

The Committee seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-1721 or 202-226-3411 TTD/TTY in advance of the event (four business days notice is requested). Questions with regard to special accommodation needs in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats) may be directed to the Committee as noted above.

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Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Good afternoon. I begin by welcoming all our witnesses this afternoon. We are fortunate to

have such an excellent group of witnesses on the topic of problems of fathers. I look forward to learning from them, and this Committee looks forward to writing legislation that will address some of the new needs that we see out there.

We do know a few things already. First and foremost is that one-third of America's children are born outside of marriage. Tragically, the hard fact is that these babies are more likely to be abused, to fail in school, to be delinquent, to be on welfare, to have non-marital births themselves, and to be unemployed and on welfare as adults. But, there are strengths within these families that we now ignore. As we will see today, at the time these babies are born, their parents have a close relationship. Indeed, in many cases they are cohabiting at the time of birth. So, these babies are not the result of one-night stands.

While the parents are in a close and often even loving relationship at the time of birth, research shows that within 2 years after birth only 7 percent of these children are living in a household with their father. Less than one-third of these fathers see their children at least weekly, and fully half have no contact at all with their children. This is a national tragedy for both the parents and the children.

Last year, my friend and colleague, Clay Shaw, did the Nation a great service by introducing his Fathers Count legislation. Mr. Cardin and I are now working on legislation that is similar, and we have every intent of marking it up before the August recess. We are focusing this legislation on two goals: first, we want to help these young fathers to improve their economic status, whether that means helping them find employment or whether it means helping them improve their skills so that they can qualify for better jobs. As a result of welfare reform, most States are conducting effective employment programs that help young mothers improve their economic status, and now we need to do a far more effective job of helping young fathers improve theirs.

The second goal of these programs must be to strengthen the bonds between these young fathers and their children and the child's mother. Why does the positive relationship between mothers and fathers at the time of their child's birth dissipate so quickly? What can be done to strengthen these bonds and to prevent that dissipation? We want to help these fathers meet both their economic and emotional obligations to their children.

We also want to support the development of the kind of strong adult ties a child's world depends on and help these young couples stay together as friends, as a family unit or to form lasting secure marriages. As we reach out to strengthen these relationships, the Nation's churches and other community-based organizations can and should play a major role.

Since assuming the chairmanship of this Subcommittee, I have had occasion to meet and talk with several people who are conducting programs specifically designed to help these young fathers achieve the goals of work and marriage I have just outlined. Several of these people will testify today. Although the early evaluations of these programs have not shown that they can achieve easy victories, we should not be discouraged. It may take many years, substantial resources, and lots of blood, sweat, and tears before we



can develop truly successful programs to help young fathers and their incipient families.

But, imagine the public policy working through both Government and community-based organizations, reconnecting fathers with their children, and even bringing fathers, mothers, and children together into stable, secure families. Does anyone doubt that this would represent the greatest policy achievement of our generation?

Our hearing this morning is simply one more step along that path, and it signals my own and I believe my colleague Mr. Cardin's commitment as well as that of the Ways and Means Committee to attacking this problem. Helping fathers fully contribute to and participate in family life is truly the right next step in welfare reform.

Mr. Cardin.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to concur in your statement. I agree with everything you have said, and I congratulate you for your leadership on this issue in getting this Subcommittee and Congress to deal with the issues of fatherhood. I am glad that you mentioned Clay Shaw and his work last year. I would also like to thank Ron Haskins, our Chief of Staff of this Subcommittee, for helping us to focus on what we can do constructively in the next step on welfare reform.

Madam Chair, there is no greater responsibility than the duty of a parent to love, support, and care for their children. To ensure that both parents meet at least the financial portions of their obligations, in 1996 we passed legislation that dealt with child support enforcement, and both you and I strongly supported that legislation knowing that a prerequisite for a parent is to financially support his or her child. These provisions targeted non-custodial parents who were able but unwilling to support their children. Well, we are here today to talk about fathers on the opposite side of the spectrum; those who want to support their children but they are unable to because of a lack of regular employment. These are dead broke dads not dead beat dads.

Fortunately, we have an existing program that can help us deal with this situation, the Welfare-to-Work program. It was established by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 to promote the employment of long-term welfare recipients and non-custodial fathers of children on welfare. Welfare-to-Work funds can be used for a wide array of employment-related services, including wage subsidies, on-the-job training, job placement services, community service programs, and post-employment services.

Many communities have developed specific proposals to use Welfare-to-Work funds to help fathers, including my own city of Baltimore, which has received in the 1998 Welfare-to-Work Competitive Grant \$3.3 million to provide comprehensive services to recipients and non-custodial fathers in public housing. Under this program, recipients will have a 6-month supported job and then be placed in unsubsidized employment.

While the Welfare-to-Work grants have stimulated this type of positive local initiatives, the program could even be more productive if States and communities had greater discretion determining eligibility for the program. Therefore, along with my Democratic colleagues on the Subcommittee, I have recently introduced legisla-

tion proposed by President Clinton to reauthorize the Welfare-to-Work program in fiscal year 2000 and to increase State and local flexibility in administering this program.

The Welfare-to-Work amendments of 1999, H.R. 1482, would allow States to enroll many more low-income fathers by broadening the program's eligibility criteria. For example, under the bill, non-custodial parents would simply have to be unemployed or underemployed and have a child receiving TANF, food stamps, Medicaid, CHIP, or SSI to be eligible for the program rather than being required to comply with two of the three specific barriers to employment. Furthermore, to ensure that every State attempts to help low-income fathers, the legislation would require the States to spend at least 20 percent of their new formula funding to help non-custodial parents support their children.

By increasing resources and local flexibility in the Welfare-to-Work program, we can build an employment infrastructure for low-income fathers in the same way many States have used TANF to promote employment for low-income mothers. I hope we can pursue this opportunity on a bipartisan basis this year.

Before I conclude, I would like to mention one more way to promote greater involvement between non-custodial fathers and their children and that is passing child support payments through to the family on welfare. Because child support paid on behalf of TANF families now goes to State welfare agencies rather than the family, low-income fathers face an obvious disincentive to pay child support. In fact, there was a recent MDRC study on the Parents' Fair Share Fatherhood Program, found that many low-income fathers resented the fact that their child support payments were not going to their children.

I look forward to listening to the witnesses that we have here today, and I join the Chair in acknowledging that we have real experts that are with us today. I hope you will share with us ways that we can improve the Federal Government's participation in this next chapter of welfare reform. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you. I would like to call the first panel of witnesses forward, please. Ray Uhalde, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Employment and Training Administration, the U.S. Department of Labor, Gordon Berlin, senior vice president, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation of New York; Sara McLanahan, Office of Population and Research, Princeton University, and Wade Horn, president of the National Fatherhood Initiative of Washington, DC. We welcome you, and thank you for being here. We are looking forward to your testimony.

I would also like to recognize my other colleagues who are here, and thank you very much.

Let us start with Mr. Uhalde.

**STATEMENT OF RAYMOND J. UHALDE, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

Mr. UHALDE. Thank you, Madam Chair and Members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss fatherhood and the Administration's Welfare-to-Work reauthorization proposal. The Administration proposal is intended to

maintain the focus of Welfare-to-Work programs on the hardest to employ welfare recipients while offering expanded opportunities to help low-income fathers better support their children.

For welfare reform to succeed, Secretary Herman recognized early that only a part of the job is to promote work among welfare recipients. We must also strengthen families and the well-being and life success of children on welfare, and find ways to bring fathers back into their children's lives. This means at least financial support of their children, but it also means the emotional, nurturing, and coaching support the fathers should provide to their children.

Enacted as part of the 1997 Balanced Budget Act, Welfare-to-Work is a key component of the Administration's welfare reform policy. While welfare caseloads have declined dramatically, many individuals remaining on welfare are long-term recipients who face significant employment barriers. As time limits on TANF assistance begin to take effect, these individuals are in particular need of the Welfare-to-Work program's employment-related services.

State and local workforce systems established under the Workforce Investment Act administer the program and provide labor market information and link welfare and workforce investment systems together. Welfare-to-Work also provides the services non-custodial parents need to become active contributors to the emotional and financial well-being of their children.

My formal testimony provides a demographic profile of low-income, non-custodial fathers. In 1990, let me just say that there were approximately 3.4 million non-custodial fathers with income below 200 percent of the poverty line. Twenty-nine percent were unemployed or not in the labor force; less than one-third worked full-time, year-round. The average wage for the employed, non-custodial father is only slightly above the minimum wage. Clearly, these fathers have only limited resources to support themselves and their families.

The Department of Labor has had a longstanding interest in improving the employment and earnings of low-income fathers. We have participated in two demonstration projects focused on young, unwed fathers or non-custodial parents. The Public Private Ventures Young Unwed Fathers Demonstration and Parents' Fair Share. We now participate in a Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration through the Welfare-to-Work competitive grants.

Parents' Fair Share demonstrated to us the many challenges we face in improving the employment prospects of low-income, non-custodial fathers. However, there is evidence from evaluations of other employment training programs that they can succeed and be effective in serving this target group. The Welfare-to-Work Grants Program makes a sizable investment in the future economic well-being of non-custodial individuals and their families. My formal testimony, again, gives examples of projects that have a substantial focus on serving non-custodial fathers.

Based on our experience with Welfare-to-Work and the previous research, I believe there are seven principles that should govern our approach to serving non-custodial fathers, and we have attempted to incorporate these into the Welfare-to-Work reauthorization. First, for many non-custodial fathers, improving the employ-

ment and earnings is a pre-condition for substantially raising the resources they provide to their families. Second, early intervention and formal commitment of the non-custodial parent are important. Fathers who feel they do not have anything to contribute to the family often do not stay connected to their family. Third, we have a window of opportunity right now since labor markets are very tight and employers are seeking new sources of workers. Many employers are experiencing high job vacancy rates and seem more open to hiring those with disadvantages. Fourth, appropriate work-focused employment services are essential. It is important to develop a range of services that combine work and skill-building. Experience indicates non-custodial fathers want income-producing jobs quickly; on-the-job training is particularly suited to this. Fifth, post-employment services that are sustained over a period of time are very important. Sixth, programs need to stress improvements in parenting skills, support for partnering, peer support, and the like. Finally, partnerships between the workforce investment system and the child support system to support fathers are beneficial, even essential.

Providing increased employment services to non-custodial fathers is essential to reducing poverty among children. And to do this requires generating stable employment for such fathers. These lessons are the basis for the bill introduced by Representative Cardin, H.R. 1482. These amendments reflect the Administration's proposal to maintain the focus of Welfare-to-Work on the hardest to employ welfare recipients while expanding employment opportunities for low-income fathers.

Primary features of Welfare-to-Work are retained—a focus on work, targeting resources to individuals and communities with the greatest need, being locally administered with business-led workforce investment systems. The amendments simplify the eligibility and provide greater flexibility to States and localities to serve the hard-to-employ welfare recipients. Second, the greater focus is on non-custodial parents. To promote this objective, the amendments provide that at least 20 percent of the formula funds allotted to a State are to be used to serve non-custodial parents. The amendments add an important feature to strengthen the commitment of the non-custodial parent and the Welfare-to-Work program to increase child support. Each non-custodial parent participating in the program is to enter into an individual responsibility contract with the local Welfare-to-Work program and the State child support agency. The Welfare-to-Work amendments of 1999 also increase resources to Indian tribes where the need is greatest.

Madam Chair, this concludes my formal testimony. We need to work in a bipartisan manner to help the hardest to serve welfare recipients, non-custodial fathers, and their children, and I look forward to working with you and other Members of this Subcommittee in this important area.

[The prepared statement follows:]

**Statement of Raymond J. Uhalde, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Employment and Training, U.S. Department of Labor**

Madam Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss fatherhood and the Administration's Welfare-to-Work reauthorization proposal. The Administration's proposal is intended

to maintain the focus of the Welfare-to-Work program on the hardest-to-serve welfare recipients, while offering expanded opportunities to help low-income fathers better support their children. Fatherhood is an issue that has been important to me for a long time, both in a personal and professional sense. For welfare reform to succeed, Secretary Herman recognized early on that only a part of the job is to promote work among welfare recipients. We must also strengthen families. The well-being and life success of children on welfare requires that we find ways to bring fathers back into their children's lives. This means, at least, financial support of their children. But it also means the emotional, nurturing and coaching support that fathers should provide to their children.

#### WELFARE-TO-WORK PROGRAM

Enacted as part of the 1997 Balanced Budget Act, Welfare-to-Work is a key component of the Administration's welfare reform policy. While welfare caseloads have declined dramatically, many individuals remaining on welfare are long-term recipients who face significant employment barriers. As time limits on TANF assistance begin to take effect, these individuals are in particular need of the Welfare-to-Work program's employment-related services. Administered by the Department of Labor and the State and local workforce system established under the Workforce Investment Act, the Welfare-to-Work program links the welfare and workforce investment systems, providing labor market information, employment-related services, and connections to employers to help hard-to-employ welfare recipients find and keep jobs. Welfare-to-Work also provides the services noncustodial parents need to become active contributors to the emotional and financial well-being of their children.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS

Statistics on the characteristics of low-income noncustodial fathers present a compelling case for increasing the focus of Welfare-to-Work on this disadvantaged population. These are men who live on the margins of society, and cannot support their families. The 1990 Survey of Income and Program Participation indicated that there were 3.4 million noncustodial fathers with incomes below 200 percent of poverty. Forty-three percent of these low-income noncustodial fathers were ages 25 to 34, and 16 percent were under 25 years. Twenty-nine percent were unemployed or not in the labor force. Less than one-third worked on a full-time, year-round basis. Average wages for employed noncustodial fathers were slightly above the minimum wage. Clearly, these fathers have only limited resources to support themselves and their children.

Poor educational attainment contributes to the labor market problems of low-income noncustodial fathers. About 43% of these individuals are high school dropouts. The labor market in the United States has gone through rapid technological changes in the last 25 years. Most jobs now require more social, cognitive and technical skills than in the past. This is an era of deteriorating labor market prospects for individuals with limited skills and education. The past two decades have brought real declines in the wages for such individuals.

The poor labor market prospects of these low-income noncustodial fathers affect families and neighborhoods. At least three fourths of these fathers have been arrested or have on going legal problems. And 46% of them have been convicted of a crime. Research indicates that once a young man has been incarcerated, his employment and earnings are substantially reduced for many years to come.

Many low-income noncustodial fathers live in central cities that are distant both physically and psychologically from the growing job opportunities in the suburbs. Discrimination in employment may also complicate the employment prospects for minority noncustodial fathers. These noncustodial fathers are disproportionately minority; 38% are African-American and 19% are Hispanic. The numbers are daunting: almost two million minority men live apart from their children and are not working full time, year round.

Noncustodial parents also lack access to social networks that can be critical in locating employment. A large proportion of jobs is filled by informal recruitment among employers who seek referrals from their current employees and other acquaintances. Many noncustodial fathers are not a part of these social networks, which can greatly enhance employment prospects.

#### NONCUSTODIAL PARENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

The Department of Labor has had a long-standing interest in improving the employment and earnings of low-income fathers. We have participated in two demonstration projects focused on young unwed fathers or non-custodial parents: the

Public Private Ventures Young Unwed Fathers Demonstration and the Parents' Fair Share Demonstration. We are now participating in the Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration through our Welfare-to-Work competitive grants program. In addition, many of our training programs and demonstration projects, such as JOBSTART the Center for Employment and Training (CET), serve unwed fathers.

*Parents' Fair Share*

Parents' Fair Share demonstrated to us the many challenges we face in improving the employment prospects of low income noncustodial fathers. The evaluation found that the program increased child support payments, mostly from men who were already working but not paying child support before participating in the program. This was encouraging news. The discouraging finding was that the Parents' Fair Share Demonstration did not improve the employment and earnings of participants compared to those of a control group, although both groups had significant employment rates. Unfortunately, the original program design for the Parents' Fair Share Demonstration, which included an intensive high support on-the-job training model, was never implemented. This was, in part, due to operational difficulties between the child support and employment and training systems, and, in part, due to reluctance of employers to participate. Recent changes in the workforce and child support systems, and the improved economy, would likely enhance the prospects for successfully implementing the high support on-the-job-training model. The Welfare-to-Work program, which operates through the workforce system and includes on-the-job training, is ideally suited to ensure fathers receive the employment services they need so they can support their children.

*JOBSTART and CET*

Evaluation evidence suggests that employment and training programs can be effective in serving low-income men, and at-risk youth who are likely to be unwed fathers. The JOBSTART demonstration attempted to replicate the successes of Job Corps in serving severely disadvantaged high school dropouts in less intensive non-residential settings. The Center for Employment Training (CET) site in the JOBSTART evaluation was 50 percent male, and this site raised the earnings of participants by \$3,000 a year over the control group, during the last two years of a four year follow-up. The JOBSTART demonstration overall raised the earnings of males with prior arrest records by \$1,500 during the last year of follow up. In addition, the National JTPA Study also found positive results for adult males receiving services under JTPA. On-the-job training was particularly effective in assisting men, resulting in earnings gains of over \$2,100, or 10 percent, over the 30-month follow-up period.

WELFARE-TO-WORK AND NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS

The Welfare-to-Work (WtW) Grants Program is making a sizeable investment in the future economic well being of noncustodial individuals and their families through both formula and competitive grants. Expected dividends include increased child support payments and reduced welfare dependency, and an increase in tax paying individuals capable of supporting their families.

Many states are using Welfare-to-Work formula grants to assist noncustodial parents. In FY 1998, over three-quarters of the approved State plans indicated that they would expend some portion of formula funds on noncustodial parents. This includes several States that indicated they would expend the majority of formula funds to serve this population.

Welfare-to-Work grants currently finance a range of activities that are designed to move low-income fathers into jobs, with an emphasis on jobs that have the potential for increased earnings. The Welfare-to-Work funds can be used broadly for employment-related activities including: wage subsidies in the public or private sector; on-the-job training; job readiness; job placement services; post-employment services; job vouchers for job readiness; placement or post placement services; community service or work experience; job retention services and supportive services.

The Department of Labor announced Round 1 Welfare-to-Work competitive grant awards in May 1998; 8 of 51 grants had a substantial focus on serving noncustodial parents. Most of these grants planned for at least 25% of program participants to be noncustodial parents, and two planned to serve exclusively noncustodial parents. Of these, five projects had specific services and strategies targeted to the needs and barriers facing noncustodial parents. These services included legal services to help participants be more attractive to employers; peer support groups; emphasis on life skills, integrity and family responsibility; and outreach and recruitment through the courts system. Two grantees planned to build on past experience in serving hard-

to-employ groups such as the homeless and disabled individuals in providing supported work environments for noncustodial parents.

Round 2 Welfare-to-Work competitive grants were awarded in November 1998. Twelve of the 75 competitive grantees, with funding totalling just over \$39 million, proposed to serve at least 30% noncustodial parents. Two of these projects will serve noncustodial parents exclusively. In reviewing Round Two grants targeted on noncustodial parents, certain themes in service strategies arose. These grant proposals tended to emphasize:

- (1) commitment to family and fatherhood, combined with parenting skills training;
- (2) job readiness, stressing positive attitudinal change (workplace behavior, employer expectations, dress, interpersonal skills, interviewing skills, job search techniques, coping with stress, anger management, etc);
- (3) services to address employment barriers associated with substance abuse and a criminal record;
- (4) intensive job retention and supportive services including case management, coaching, and peer support activities; and
- (5) strategies to recruit noncustodial parents, especially working with the court system and child support enforcement agencies.

The Department plans to announce Round 3 Competitive Grants in late summer 1999. This round identified noncustodial parents as one of five priority populations.

Some examples of what Welfare-to-Work grants are funding for fathers include: *Institute for Responsible Fathers*. The Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization, located in Washington, D.C., provides direct services to low income, non-custodial fathers. The program's goal is to bring the father back into the family structure to provide leadership, economic and social support, love and nurturing. Services provided include: employer connections, a "people to jobs" transportation network, car donations and repairs and automotive training.

*Los Angeles County Private Industry Council*. Los Angeles County's Noncustodial Parent to Work Project assists long-term TANF recipients end their welfare dependency by increasing child support payments from 1,625 noncustodial parents of TANF supported children. To do so, the project helps unemployed noncustodial parents find unsubsidized employment, and helps underemployed noncustodial parents increase their earnings—enabling them to pay more child support. Innovative features of this project include developing both parents' capacity to financially support their children; bringing together a wide range of public and private agencies; addressing noncustodial parents' legal issues; providing noncustodial parents with access to information concerning child support; and providing peer support groups to work to change noncustodial parents' attitudes about child support and child rearing.

*DeKalb Economic Opportunity Authority*. This Georgia project will be conducted as an integral part of the DeKalb Workforce Center, which is the county's state-of-the-art One-Stop center. The program will be tied into the County's network of five Family Resource Centers, three public housing sites and two Head Start/Family Development Centers. These centers will be important for recruiting and are located in DeKalb's most impoverished communities.

A range of services will be provided to assist noncustodial parents in retaining employment and supporting their children. This project is an example of how Welfare-to-Work grantees are using One-Stop centers to provide services. The specific services include: assessment (including commitment to responsible fatherhood); substance abuse services; legal assistance; job readiness and work maturity (including attitude and behavioral issues, workplace behavior, employer expectations, dress, interpersonal skills, anger management, interviewing skills, job search techniques, and coping with stress); parenting skills; case management and job coaching; post-placement training (including literacy and GED preparation, occupational skills training); ongoing transitional support (peer support, job clubs, and case management).

*City of Minneapolis*. The Fostering Actions To Help Earning and Responsibility (FATHER) Program focuses on achieving self-sufficiency for noncustodial fathers in Northside, Camden, Phillips, Central and Powderhorn, Minnesota. The program is an innovative attempt to integrate family and employment services for noncustodial fathers. Participants will have access to job counselors, a database of job openings and transportation that will help individuals from the city reach jobs in the suburbs. Additionally, child support enforcement officials will work to create a flexible child support payment plan and encourage fathers to develop and maintain strong emotional bonds with their children.

*Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County*. Welfare-to-Work Milwaukee is a collaborative project of the Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County and the five local agencies responsible for the implementation of Wisconsin Works in the county's six regions. The project addresses the long-term needs of participants, in-

cluding noncustodial parents whose legal problems combined with poor academic and work skills bar them from sustained employment. The project uses community-based vendors and performance-based contracts. Legal services are provided in addition to job placement and post-employment services.

*Houston Works.* Houston Works is the workforce development entity for the City of Houston and is collaborating with the Houston Community College System, Texas Southern University, Southwest Memorial Hospital, Continental Airlines, SEARCH Homeless project, HUD, Baylor College of Medicine and the Houston Housing Authority. Participants receive job readiness counseling; temporary and permanent job placement services, post-employment and academic enrichment services. Participants also receive life skills, case management and family-based assistance and counseling, and transportation services.

*Eastern Workforce Development Board Inc, Muskogee, Oklahoma.* This project will expand and supplement the Welfare-to-Work formula program, targeting noncustodial parents. It will develop an intensive job retention and employer incentive program. The project uses a case management approach and leverages resources from other training programs to serve children and other family members of participants. The program plans to establish an independent Employee Assistance Program for employers to help retain new workers.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

Based on our experience to date with the Welfare-to-Work program, and previous demonstrations, research and programs, I believe there are certain principles that should govern our approach to serving noncustodial fathers. The themes underling our Welfare-to-Work reauthorization proposal include:

- *For many low-income, noncustodial fathers, improving employment and earnings is a precondition to substantially increasing the resources they provide to their families.* This requires interventions that address the many labor market problems and barriers these fathers face, as well as turnover and upward mobility problems. Thus, a wide range of services and approaches are important.

- *Early intervention and a formal commitment of the noncustodial parent are important.* Fathers who feel that they do not have anything to contribute to the family often do not stay connected to their family. We know that early intervention is crucial to establishing paternity, to helping men assume responsibility for their children and to increasing access and visitation. The most promising strategy to assist low income noncustodial fathers in becoming better parents and productive workers is to intervene early with a broad array of employment services and interventions that are designed to promote family and job stability. Such interventions must help these fathers accept the responsibility and obligation of supporting their children.

- *We have a window of opportunity right now, since labor markets are very tight and employers are seeking new sources of workers.* The poor skills and criminal records that many poor fathers bring to the labor market are major disincentives to employers hiring them under the usual circumstances. However, many employers are experiencing high job vacancy rates and report difficulties finding workers. Many employers seem more open to hiring those with disadvantages. This is clearly true for welfare recipients and is likely true for low-income fathers.

- *Appropriate work-focused employment services are essential.* It is important to develop a range of services that combines work and skill building. Experience indicates that non-custodial fathers want income producing employment quickly. On-the-job training is a particularly effective strategy for this group of workers. Further attention needs to be given to developing an enhanced on-the-job training strategy for noncustodial fathers.

- *Post-employment services that are sustained over a period of time are important.* Most noncustodial fathers work sporadically or part-time and few have full-time employment on a year-round basis. Post-employment services are critical to help the fathers keep their jobs and increase their wages.

- *Programs need to stress improvements in parenting skills, support for partnering, peer support, and the like.* Program experience suggests that fathers benefit from services focused on conflict resolution and strengthening parent-child relationships.

- *Partnerships between the workforce investment system and the child support system are beneficial.* It is important to build local partnerships to support fathers. If programs are to increase employment and increase child support, close collaboration between the workforce development agency, the community-based providers, and the child support system is necessary.

Providing increased employment services to noncustodial fathers is essential to reducing poverty among children. Chronically unemployed, underemployed and



uneducated fathers with criminal records, substance abuse or other such problems, living apart from their children and the mothers of those children, are unlikely to be able to assume the responsibility of a nurturing and supportive parent. To assume such responsibility requires stable employment, which in turn requires skill development, accompanied by the supportive and family services necessary to succeed in the labor market and society.

#### THE WELFARE-TO-WORK AMENDMENTS OF 1999

These lessons and others we have learned from the first two years of the Welfare-to-Work experience are the basis for the bill introduced by Representative Cardin last week as H.R. 1482, the Welfare-to-Work Amendments of 1999. These amendments include the Administration's proposal and are intended to maintain the focus of the Welfare-to-Work program on the hardest-to-serve welfare recipients, while expanding employment opportunities to help low-income fathers better support their children.

The primary features of the program are retained—including the focus on work, targeting resources to individuals and communities with the greatest need, and administration through the locally administered, business-led workforce investment system. There are several important enhancements to the current law.

First, the amendments simplify the eligibility criteria and provide greater flexibility to States and localities to provide services to additional categories of hard-to-employ welfare recipients and noncustodial parents. Concerns have been raised by State and local officials and program operators that the current eligibility criteria are too complex and narrow, with the result that a significant proportion of the least job ready welfare recipients and noncustodial parents are excluded from participation. Specifically, the current law requires that at least 70 percent of funds must be expended to assist participants who have at least two of three specified barriers to employment and that the recipient or minor child be a long-term recipient.

The proposed amendments provide for separate eligibility requirements for recipients and noncustodial parents. With respect to recipients, while retaining the requirement for long-term reciprocity, the amendments provide that they must meet one rather than two specified barriers to employment. In addition, the amendments simplify the first specified barrier to employment, which currently requires that the recipient has failed to complete secondary school or obtain a GED *and* has low skills in reading or math. There have been many reports that due to past practices, such as social promotion, a significant number of recipients who have diplomas still have low basic skills and those low skills are a major barrier to employment. Therefore, the amendments divide these criteria into two separate barriers that allow assistance to recipients who lack a high school diploma (or a GED) *or* have reading, computing or math skills at or below the 8th grade level. The amendments also add long-term recipients with disabilities, long-term recipients who are homeless, and long-term recipients who are victims of domestic violence to the categories of recipients with employment barriers who may be served by the Welfare-to-Work program.

With respect to noncustodial parents, the new criteria provide that they be unemployed, underemployed, or having difficulty paying child support obligations, and that the minor child of the noncustodial parent meets the current requirements for long-term reciprocity, is eligible for or receiving TANF benefits, has received TANF benefits within the preceding year but is no longer receiving benefits, or is eligible for or receiving Food Stamps, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, or Children's Health Improvement Program assistance. In determining the eligible noncustodial parents to be served, a preference is to be provided for those parents with minor children who are long-term recipients. While providing greater flexibility to States and localities, these criteria effectively link eligibility for services to both the needs of the noncustodial parent and the child.

Second, the amendments provide a greater focus on increasing the employment of noncustodial parents to better enable such parents to contribute child support payments and other assistance to their children. To promote these objectives in all States, the amendments provide that at least 20 percent of the formula funds allotted to a State are to be used to serve noncustodial parents. This threshold may be met through any combination of expenditures under both the 15 percent State reserve and the 85 percent of funds allocated to local areas under the substate formula. The State plan is to describe how these projects will be coordinated to accomplish this result.

In addition, the amendments add an important feature to strengthen the commitment of the noncustodial parent and the Welfare-to-Work program to increased child support. Each noncustodial parent participating in the program is to enter into a personal responsibility contract with the local Welfare-to-Work program and the

State child support agency under which the noncustodial parent commits to cooperate in the establishment of paternity and in the establishment or appropriate modification of a child support order, to make regular payments of child support, and to participate in services that the program reciprocally commits to provide to assist the noncustodial parent in finding and keeping employment. In order to protect custodial parents and their children who may be at risk of domestic violence, the amendments clarify that the Welfare-to-Work program does not create new obligations or alter existing requirements or protections related to child support cooperation. This contract makes clear the expectations and responsibilities of the parties involved and provides a framework for attaining the program's objectives.

By expanding eligibility, providing a 20 percent spending floor, and incorporating personal responsibility contracts, these amendments would build on the existing program to ensure the establishment of an infrastructure in every State for providing effective services to noncustodial parents. The amended program incorporates the previously described lessons learned in serving this population.

In addition, the Welfare-to-Work Amendments of 1999 would enhance current law by:

- Increasing resources to Indian tribes from the current 1 percent of the total to 3 percent, and authorizing Indian tribes to apply directly to the Department of Labor for Welfare-to-Work Competitive Grants.
- Improving resource allocation by recapturing unallotted formula funds for competitive grants in the subsequent year, and providing a preference in awarding these funds to those local applicants and Indian tribes from States that did not receive formula grants.
- Streamlining reporting requirements through the Department of Labor.
- Promoting best practices by reserving funds for technical assistance, including disseminating innovative strategies for serving noncustodial parents.

In sum, these amendments would reauthorize and enhance the WtW program. While our welfare reform efforts have resulted in some important early successes, much remains to be done. Enactment of the Welfare-to-Work Amendments of 1999 would provide significant opportunities to the hard-to-employ welfare recipients to make the transition to stable employment and assist noncustodial parents in making meaningful contributions to their children's well-being.

Madam Chairman, this concludes my formal testimony. We need to work together in a bipartisan manner to help the hardest-to-serve welfare recipients, noncustodial fathers, and their children. I look forward to working with you and other members of the Subcommittee on this important subject.

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Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much for your testimony.

Mr. BERLIN.

**STATEMENT OF GORDON L. BERLIN, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MANPOWER DEMONSTRATION RESEARCH CORPORATION, NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

Mr. BERLIN. Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the results from the Parents' Fair Share Demonstration project. This was an employment and fatherhood program for low-income, unemployed fathers who owe child support. It was authorized by the Family Support Act of 1988 with a goal of learning whether the employment and training services offered to mothers on welfare could also help fathers. It was a response to three problems: fathers failure to pay child support, the deteriorating labor market position of low-income men with limited educational skills, and persistent poverty among children. It was motivated by a conviction that it takes two parents to support a child, both financially and emotionally.

The project had three goals: to increase the employment and earnings of low-income men, to improve their parenting skills and

their parent involvement, and, third, to increase the child support that they paid. PFS attempted to accomplish this by offering four services: employment and training to help fathers get jobs and better jobs; parent support and instruction to help them in their fatherhood role; enhanced child support enforcement to make that system more responsive to the changing ability of low-income men to pay child support, and, finally, dispute resolution services because we thought that if fathers got more involved, there would be more conflicts or disagreements, with the custodial parent of the children.

What were some of the operational lessons from this project? First, some lessons about the fathers who participated. The fathers who were referred to this program were very poor. All of them came through the child support enforcement system because they owed child support and weren't paying it, and they had children who were on AFDC. Fifty percent lacked a high school diploma; many had no permanent home, and a surprisingly high 70 percent had an arrest record of some form. In addition, these low-income fathers were very involved in the lives of their children. And, finally, we discovered that the programs were really trying to meet the needs of two different groups of fathers. One group worked a lot, but they worked in temporary secondary labor market jobs, often moving from job to job. They needed better, more stable jobs. The second group of fathers were hard to employ. They presented a long list of employment barriers, few skills, limited formal education, a history of substance abuse, homelessness and other difficult problems.

Next, what are some of the lessons that emerged about operating this kind of program? First, building these kinds of programs, as Mr. Uhalde said, is challenging. We had to develop one program with one message, and we had five or six different agencies all trying to coordinate in a partnership to deliver the PFS package of services. Each of those agencies—child support, fatherhood programs, welfare departments, and employment and training programs—had different missions, different funding sources, different constituencies, and different services that they offered. This particular partnership worked best when the child support system played an active and committed role. In this program, of course, fathers entered through the child support enforcement system, so it was very important that that system be a key player in putting the program together.

A second program lesson is that despite these operational challenges, the program was successful in engaging fathers in parenting and job search services. Beginning with parenting, as noted above, fathers in Parents' Fair Share saw their children a lot. About 50 percent of them saw their children at least once a month. But they were unsure of their role as fathers. Many did not grow up with their own fathers; they were often discouraged from playing a role by the child's mother's parents; they lacked experience and role models, and often parenting know-how. Despite these barriers, fathers' interest and commitment to their children was demonstrated by their participation in the Parents' Fair Share parenting services and fatherhood classes, and I think the fathers' interest and involvement and commitment to their children is a pow-

erful leverage point for both programs and policies. One might sum it up by saying if you build a service network for fathers, they will come.

However, if fatherhood services are needed, they are not sufficient. In our society, fathers define their roles as being providers. Fathers who can't provide often grow estranged from their children and the mothers of their children, but to be providers, fathers need jobs that pay enough so that they can provide both for their children and for themselves. Unfortunately, getting fathers better jobs via skill upgrading or other means have proved very difficult to implement. It is a qualitatively different task than employment and training programs have faced in the past.

What difference did the Parents' Fair Share Program make? It made an important difference in increasing the likelihood that fathers would pay child support, and it also increased the amount of child support paid. It did this in two ways: one was by outreach and review of child support cases that the system wouldn't normally work. By working these cases, child support officials discovered a number of fathers that actually had earnings, and they were able to get those fathers to pay child support. A second way PFS affected the amount of child support paid was by providing a package of services to fathers who did not have earnings. This package of services, independently, on top of the case review effect, also increased the amount of child support paid in some sites and the likelihood that fathers would pay child support. And, in some places, for example, Dayton OH, the increase in the average payment was large, about 55 percent higher than in the control group. From the point of view of child support administrators, these are large increases.

What difference did Parents' Fair Share make in the employment and earnings of these fathers? In this area, Parents' Fair Share was less successful, although two of the programs did produce increases in employment rates of about 11 percent. The programmatic challenges of improving the employment position of low-income fathers have not yet been surmounted successfully either in PFS or in many other programs.

What about the programs effect on fathering and parenting? While we will have more information on this soon, the program did have an effect on the intensity of father involvement. Observations of the peer support component, ethnographic interviews with the fathers as recounted in the just released MDRC—Russell Sage Foundation published book "Fathers Fair Share" all indicated that the fathers learned a lot about how to be parents. They applied those lessons in their interactions with parents. As a result, we have observed increased involvement with the custodial parent in decisionmaking. In addition, we have seen some evidence that the fathers of younger children were the most likely to be involved in the lives of their children. Finally, there was also some evidence in at least a couple of the sites—Dayton, OH and Jacksonville, FL—that the fathers participated in additional religious service-going with their children and the mother of their children as a part of this program. In summary, PFS did appear to help fathers become better, more involved parents.

Very briefly, what are some of the elements we should consider in a next generation program? Again, building these partnerships among the diverse set of agencies required to meet the needs of fathers is critical; investments in partnership building at the front end of this kind of complicated program is very important. Second, offering fatherhood services can make a difference in the parenting skills of low-income fathers; the services are needed, wanted and sought after. Fathers' interest in and commitment to their children provides valuable program leverage, which when coupled with the right services can make a difference in fathers' interaction with their children. But fatherhood services are necessary but not sufficient. Last, and most important, we have to learn what works best for whom in the employment and earnings arena. Combining skills training in an on-the-job format; combining work and education; and effective job retention services are all services that we should be systematically testing to learn what works. In addition, we have to provide community service jobs for those who need immediate employment and can't find it. Next, much more work is needed in meeting the needs of the hard to employ. The overwhelming majority of the PFS eligibles had arrest records. More widespread use of the Federal Bonding program in all programs that serve low-income fathers is necessary. Finally, it could also be valuable to try to link programs for the non-custodial parent with programs for the custodial parent, again, in keeping with the original vision that I stated of it takes two parents to raise a child, both emotionally and financially, even when they aren't married. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement follows:]

**Statement of Gordon L. Berlin, Senior Vice President, Manpower  
Demonstration Research Corporation, New York, New York**

My name is Gordon Berlin. I am a senior vice president at the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC). MDRC is a non-profit, non-partisan social policy research organization created in the mid-1970's to test new approaches to the nation's most pressing social problems. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the lessons learned from Parents' Fair Share (PFS), an important seven-site test of programs that provide employment, parenting, and other services to fathers of children receiving welfare, who are unemployed and unable to meet their child support obligations. In exchange for current and future cooperation with the child support system, a partnership of local organizations offered fathers services designed to help them: (1) find more stable and better-paying jobs; (2) pay child support on a consistent basis; and (3) assume a fuller and more responsible parental role.

Authorized by the Family Support Act of 1988, supported by a consortium of public and private funders, and operated by partnerships of local employment and training programs, child support systems, fatherhood groups, welfare departments, and family court systems, PFS is the most comprehensive and carefully studied effort to provide services to noncustodial parents. The program operated for about five years in seven sites—Los Angeles, California; Jacksonville, Florida; Springfield, Massachusetts; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Trenton, New Jersey; Dayton, Ohio; and Memphis, Tennessee.

The Parents' Fair Share project had three equal goals:

- (1) to increase the employment and earnings of low-income noncustodial parents of children receiving welfare;
- (2) to increase child support payments; and
- (3) to support, encourage, and improve fathers' parenting skills.

PFS was a deliberate attempt to respond to two interrelated national concerns: (1) the failure of fathers to establish paternity, and reliably and consistently pay owed child support; and (2) the deteriorating labor market situation of less-educated men, whose inflation adjusted earnings have fallen precipitously over the 23-year period (1973-1996). Together, these two problems spawned a third—a quarter or more of the nation's children spending a significant share of their childhood growing

up in a poor, single-parent household, often without father involvement. Our national response—tougher child support enforcement rules—was most effective in increasing collections from noncustodial parents with relatively stable jobs and residence, so-called middle-class fathers, but it appeared to have the unintended consequence of driving poor, unemployed fathers farther underground, and possibly even away from involvement with their children.

Child support administrators and family court judges faced a dilemma. When a noncustodial parent with little work history claimed he was unable to pay his child support because of unemployment, it was frequently difficult to determine the truth of his claim. In practice, courts and agency staff were left with two unsatisfactory options: (1) threatening jail in an effort to coerce payment; or (2) sending the parent out on his own to look for work. While the first option was appropriate for those able but unwilling to pay, neither option was appropriate for those who were unable to support their children. Further, the agencies and courts often struggle to distinguish the unwilling from the *unable*.

Parents' Fair Share was designed as a third option that would enable the child support system to offer help finding a job to fathers who were not paying because they were unemployed, while its participation requirement would simultaneously make it difficult for fathers who were concealing earnings to continue doing so. Recognizing that the key challenge was getting fathers to pay child support not just once, but month after month, the program included fatherhood services and supports. Program designers hypothesized that reinforcing fathers' involvement with their children would help them to be better fathers, and better fathers who see their children regularly would be more likely to pay child support.

#### THE PARENTS' FAIR SHARE MODEL

To meet these challenges, program services were built around four core components:

- *Peer Support.* This component was designed to teach and encourage positive parenting skills (e.g., supplying activities for fathers and children that were age appropriate), to provide a group discussion forum where fathers could discuss their involvement with their children, to enhance participants' life skills (e.g., handling conflicts with the child's mother), to strengthen participants' commitment to work, and to inform participants about their rights and obligations as noncustodial parents. Built around a curriculum MDRC supplied, called Responsible Fatherhood, and run by a trained facilitator, this component revealed that many of the fathers had a strong interest in their children's development, and many were already actively involved. But they were frequently unsure of their role, having had few role models in their own childhood.

- *Employment and Training.* The goal of these activities was to help participants secure long-term, stable employment at a wage level that would allow them to support themselves and their children. Sites were strongly encouraged to offer a variety of services, including job-search assistance, opportunities for education, and skills training. In addition, since it is preferable to engage participants in income-producing activities quickly, sites were encouraged to offer opportunities for on-the-job training, paid-work experience, and other activities that mix skills training or education with part-time employment.

- *Enhanced child support enforcement.* One objective of PFS was to increase support payments made on behalf of children living in single-parent welfare households. Although a legal and administrative structure already existed to establish and enforce child support obligations, demonstration sites were asked to develop new procedures, services, and incentives in this area. These included steps to tie orders to the ever-changing ability of fathers to pay by expediting the modification of child support awards, and/or flexible rules that allowed child support orders to be reduced while noncustodial parents participated in PFS, and special monitoring of the status of PFS cases.

- *Mediation.* Often disagreements between custodial and noncustodial parents about visitation, household expenditures, lifestyles, child care, and school arrangements—and the roles and actions of other adults in their children's lives—influence child support payment patterns. Thus, demonstration sites had to provide opportunities for parents to mediate their differences using services modeled on those now provided through many family courts in divorce cases.

The PFS intake process was an important part of the demonstration. In most cases, noncustodial parents were referred to PFS during court hearings or appointments scheduled by CSE staff in response to the parents' failure to make court-ordered support payments. Several of the sites put in place new procedures to identify parents who appeared to be eligible for PFS (whose child support cases would typi-

cally have low enforcement priority) and scheduled special hearings or appointments to review their reasons for nonpayment. Parents who cited unemployment as the reason for their nonsupport were ordered to attend PFS activities until they found a job and began paying support. In some sites, parents just establishing paternity were also referred to PFS when they had no means to meet child support obligations.

#### RECENT FINDINGS

In recent months, MDRC has released two important reports on the Parents' Fair Share program experience. *Building Opportunities, Enforcing Obligations: Implementation and Interim Impacts of Parents' Fair Share* summarizes the program's implementation experience and presents the first evidence on its effects on employment and child support. *Fathers' Fair Share: Helping Poor Men Manage Child Support and Fatherhood*, a book published by the Russell Sage Foundation, provides a rich ethnographic portrait of PFS-eligible low-income fathers' lives. A third report, *Promoting Non-custodial Parents' Involvement with their Children*, will be released later this year. It explores the program's effect on parental involvement.

In this summary testimony, I draw primarily on the first two reports. The impact findings that are presented are only the first chapter in the PFS story because they rely solely on administrative records, cover only a part of the full PFS impact study group, provide only six quarters of follow-up, and do not cover several key goals of the program. Most of this information is based on administrative records—child support and earnings data—maintained by the participating states. Later this year, we will be analyzing survey data that will help us get a handle on informal employment and child support payments and involvement with their children, information that is not captured in administrative records.

#### IMPLEMENTATION LESSONS

*Implementing PFS presented significant management challenges; most sites were able to meet this challenge.* To successfully implement PFS, the local partners had to change their standard operating procedures in ways that often conflicted with pre-existing agency priorities. Local child support enforcement agencies were asked to focus attention on cases without known income, cases that typically received little attention. Employment and training agencies that usually serve volunteers were asked to work with men who were mandated to participate by the courts, and they were being asked to help them find better jobs, a qualitatively different task than most of these agencies had performed in the past. Finally, community-based fatherhood organizations were now partners in a program that could sanction men who failed to meet their mandatory participation requirement.

*The majority of the noncustodial parents referred to PFS were living in poverty, with a recent history of moving from one low-wage job to another.* Many PFS fathers faced substantial barriers to mainstream employment: nearly 50 percent lacked a high-school diploma, and about 70 percent had been arrested for an offense unrelated to child support. Nonetheless, within the PFS population, there were fathers for whom finding and keeping a job would be an important advance, and others for whom the goal was better-paying and more stable employment. Both groups were poor. These two different groups required different program strategies, and agencies found it difficult to meet both needs.

*The sites were successful in engaging fathers in PFS' peer support and job search services.* Many noncustodial parents initially expressed skepticism about the goals and services of PFS, based on their perception that the child support system was "stacked against" them, which program staff had to overcome. They did so. Slightly more than two-thirds of the noncustodial parents referred to PFS participated in at least one PFS program activity. Peer support was the most consistently well-run component during the demonstration and generally was viewed as the central PFS activity, providing a focal point for participants. Most sites relied heavily on job-search workshops and job clubs, running these activities and peer support simultaneously because of parents' strong desire to find work quickly.

*Skill-building services, particularly classroom training, and on-the-job training, proved to be the PFS activity most difficult to implement.* Two sites that did emphasize the goal of getting participants better jobs than they could find on their own made job developers an integral part of their program. Three sites—Los Angeles, Grand Rapids, and Springfield—were most successful in putting on-the-job training and classroom training in place. These sites had active leadership that focused on increasing the number of skill-building activities.

*Sites in which the child support agency played a leading role in PFS showed flexibility in developing new approaches to monitoring the status of cases and encour-*

*aging participation in program services.* Because of the differing perspectives of the local agencies involved in PFS, agencies could choose to focus on their part of the program and not seriously engage in the difficult task of coordinating activities. However, in sites in which the child support agency played a leading role, staff were well positioned to work as a problem-solving team, with the child support agency driving the effort. Because fathers often find it difficult to negotiate the child support system, sites that were committed to removing obstacles to a father's participation, and who responded quickly when fathers got jobs, were more likely to have impacts.

#### IMPACTS: THE PFS DIFFERENCE

##### *Child Support*

*The PFS intake process alone produced significant increases in child support payments to the CSE agency even before any referral to PFS services.* A special study in three sites—Dayton, Grand Rapids, and Memphis—isolated the effect of the extra outreach and case review undertaken for PFS by the child support agency. This review occurred before any referral to services. Working with child support cases that the enforcement system would not normally work because there was no evidence of income, paid off. In all three sites, the PFS intake process produced statistically significant increases in both the percentage paying support to the child support agency, and the average total child support payment amount. These increases amounted to nearly an 8 percentage point increase in the percent who ever paid any child support, and a \$173 increase in the average amount of child support paid over an 18-month period. While these increases are small, it is important to remember that the numbers are averages for everyone in the study, the overwhelming majority of whom were not paying any child support. Thus, the actual increase in child support paid by those who paid is much higher. In sum, the increase in child support payments occurred because the extra outreach and case review led parents to inform the child support agency of previously unreported employment.

*The full PFS program combining employment, parenting, and enhanced child support services also had a positive independent effect on the share of PFS eligibles who ever paid child support.* Six months following enrollment in the study, PFS eligibles were 4 to 8 percentage points more likely to pay child support than a group of comparable noncustodial parents who were not eligible for PFS. Somewhat surprisingly, this difference only affected average amounts of child support paid in some follow-up quarters, possibly because PFS lowered child support orders to make them more compatible with the father's ability to pay.

*These positive impacts on percentage paying support were mainly the result of substantial impacts in three of the seven sites—Dayton, Grand Rapids, and Los Angeles.* In these three cities, the program produced substantial impacts on the percentage of parents paying support, in most quarters ranging from 10 to 15 percentage points. Often, this amounted to a 15 to 50 percent increase in the proportion of parents paying support. Typically, these increases in support payments led to significant increases in the average amount of child support paid. In Dayton, the increase in the average payment was 55 percent higher than a control group that was not eligible for PFS services, while in Grand Rapids it was 20 percent.

#### EMPLOYMENT

*Referral to PFS did not produce an overall impact on employment rates or earnings across the seven sites.* At any given time, about half of the fathers enrolled in the study were employed. Employment rates among those eligible for PFS did not differ significantly from those of the control group who were not eligible for PFS.

*Effects on employment varied by site, with two sites successfully increasing the percentage of parents who worked at some point during the follow-up period.* In two sites—Los Angeles and Dayton—referral to PFS produced an 11 percentage point increase in the proportion of parents who worked at some point during the six quarters of follow-up.

*Persistent increases in child support payment rates came from parents who were employed in the formal economy.* This suggests that helping fathers find and keep mainstream jobs is indeed essential if the CSE system is going to increase child support payment amounts beyond those reported above.

#### FATHERS AS PARENTS

*PFS does appear to have affected the quality of father involvement more than the amount of visiting.* PFS fathers had a lot of contact with their children before the



program began. Nearly half of all fathers in this study visited their children at least once a month. PFS does not appear to have affected the amount of visiting. Observations of the peer support program in operation, and ethnographic interviews with the fathers themselves, suggest that peer support helped participants to be better fathers. Peer parental support was generally well received by the noncustodial parents, providing them an opportunity to relate to a peer group in constructive ways, discuss troubling personal and societal problems, develop new problem-solving skills, and have access to an advocate who believed in their potential. As one father reported, “. . . It helped me to be a better father, to get better perspective on what I'm supposed to do as a father, and I appreciated that.” In addition, fathers were more likely to get involved in decisions involving their children and to have more active disagreements with the custodial parent about these decisions. Early information suggests that involvement in parenting may be most likely to occur when the children are younger, suggesting that programs which intervene earlier may be better positioned to affect parenting behavior.

#### PROGRAM DESIGN AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

*The three sites that produced impacts on child support payments share the following characteristics: (a) strong involvement of the child support agency in PFS; (b) a strong peer support program that focused on the importance of supporting children; and (c) in the case of Dayton, low existing levels of support payments.* In two of the three sites that produced child support impacts, the child support enforcement agency was in the lead, driving the planning process and the management of the program, developing procedures to involve cases that would have been given low enforcement priority, and putting in place regular reviews of noncompliant cases. In the third site, the child support enforcement agency and the welfare department worked hand-in-hand to dramatically change the PFS outreach and intake process, including targeting cases for whom location information was weak, developing new forms of legal notice for hearings, and conducting home visits just prior to hearings to encourage an appearance.

*A lack of fit between the employment and training services emphasized in the sites and the needs of a substantial portion of the PFS parents—better jobs for most, intensive investments to overcome barriers to employment for some—as well as, limited job opportunities within their neighborhoods, contributed to the lack of overall impacts on employment and earnings.* Because the PFS sample was largely made up of men who had worked—with varying degrees of regularity—at low-paying jobs, the challenge for the program was helping these men find better jobs. Job-search assistance and job-club services, the most common employment services in PFS, are effective in helping more people find jobs, but they were not well suited to helping people who are already employed raise their wage rate or stabilize their work history. In Los Angeles and Memphis, where there was a hint of a trend toward positive earnings impacts at the end of the follow-up, a much higher than average percentage of PFS parents participated in skill-building activities (basic education or occupational training), which might have been better suited to boost earnings for a group that was already working.

*Experimentation with new combinations of services that show greater promise is necessary.* Finding new ways to combine work and skills-building services seems important because these parents need income quickly and also need to develop a plan for wage progression over time. U.S. Department of Labor requirements under the new welfare-to-work program that encourage sites that wish to offer skill-building services to first get a participant into a job and then provide the education or training, may be particularly well suited to noncustodial fathers.

*Job retention services may also be an important program addition.* These services were added to PFS half-way through the demonstration, but most sites were not successful in fully implementing them.

*Jobs were sometimes scarce in these communities and the men had few means of getting to locations where jobs were more plentiful.* This suggests that there may be a need in some communities for a pool of time-limited subsidized community service jobs to help men quickly start earning a paycheck and build a work history that will make them more appealing.

*Low-income noncustodial fathers have a strong commitment to their children, but they are often unsure of their role and require support.* There is a need for services to help low-income fathers learn about, and be supported in, the active roles they already play as fathers. Parenting is a humbling, imperfect, trial and error experience for all fathers. But most fathers have more resources than the men in PFS to draw upon in learning how to play that role. Low-income noncustodial parents could benefit from supports that helped to fill these gaps when they exist.

*While the PFS experience demonstrates that it is possible to build the agency partnerships required to deliver services to this population, it requires considerable ongoing work.* For a program like PFS to work, there must be a strong local service partnership, in which agencies coming from many different perspectives can achieve a common purpose. Technical assistance investments are a critical part of this process.

In summary, we have learned much from Parents' Fair Share about the needs of low-income fathers and about the do's and don'ts of delivering services. The futures of an important share of the nation's children depend on our ability to use these lessons wisely to help fathers play an essential role as parents.

Thank you for this opportunity to present lessons about working with low-income parents from the Parents' Fair Share project.

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Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much.  
Sara McLanahan.

**STATEMENT OF SARA McLANAHAN, PROFESSOR OF  
SOCIOLOGY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY,  
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY**

Ms. McLANAHAN. Madam Chair and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today. I have come here to tell you about a major new study of unwed parents and their children that my colleagues and I are conducting and that I think has important implications for the fatherhood initiative that you are discussing.

As you just said, Chairman Johnson, unwed parents and their children are the fastest growing family form in the United States today; one-third of all children are born to unwed parents. Unfortunately, we know very little about these families, and the relationships between the parents, and we know even less about the fathers. Our study is designed to remedy this situation. We begin at the hospitals by interviewing the mothers soon after they have given birth. Next, we interview the fathers, either at the hospitals or someplace else, as soon as we can find them, and we are finding a lot of them in the hospital, I should say. And, finally, we plan to follow both parents for at least 4 years to learn about their relationships and to learn about how public policies affect their relationships and their lives.

Today, I want to talk to you about our findings from two cities: Austin, TX and Oakland, CA. These are two very different cities, but, surprisingly, the results and the patterns that we are observing are very similar in both cities, and I suspect that when we finish collecting data in 20 cities and have 4,000 births in our study that the findings of these two cities will also be very similar.

I want to make three points today, and I have included in your packet a set of tables, if you could just refer to them. The first point I want to emphasize is that the vast majority of unwed parents are highly committed to one another and to their children at least at birth. Over half of the parents in our study were living together when the child was born, and 80 percent were romantically involved. Nearly 70 percent of the parents, both the mothers and fathers, said their chances of marriage were 50/50 or better. With respect to the children, 86 percent of the mothers were planning to put the father's name on the birth certificate; 78 percent of the fathers had provided financial support during the pregnancy, and

over 90 percent of the mothers wanted the fathers to be involved in raising the child. Clearly, these figures belie the myths that the mothers don't know who these fathers are and that the fathers do not care about their children. The challenge for policymakers is to nourish rather than undermine these commitments.

My second point is that most unwed fathers are not in a good position to support their new families, as you have heard before. Nearly 40 percent of the men in our study have no high school degree; another 40 percent have only a high school degree. So, only 20 percent had any post-high school education, and in today's labor market, that does not bode well for their earnings capacity. Those who work have very low earnings, and about 20 percent of the fathers had not worked at all in the previous year—worked or gone to school.

Some of the fathers also had personal problems. Eight percent had problems with drugs or alcohol; 7 percent of the mothers reported the fathers had hit or slapped them, and 4 percent were in jail at the time of our interviews. We interviewed some of the fathers in jail, and we plan to follow them also. In sum, despite their good intentions, many of the fathers in our study have serious handicaps, both economic and personal, and will need a lot of help if they are going to maintain stable families.

My last point speaks to the design of fatherhood initiatives. I believe these programs can make a difference if they are targeted on the right men. As you know, the Parents' Fair Share Program, which Gordon has just spoken about, produced rather disappointing results. Fathers in the experimental group ended up paying more child support than the fathers in the control group, but their earnings and employment did not improve. These results are not so surprising. Previous evaluations have shown that improving the prospects of men with very low skills and low education is a difficult if not impossible task. The people who run these programs will tell you that a major reason they fail is that the men who participate in them are not motivated, and they drop out of the programs. The fathers who participated in Parents' Fair Share Program also had very limited skills, and their motivation in many cases was also poor. Most of them were estranged from their children when they entered the program, and some participated in lieu of going to jail. They were participating out of fear rather than love in some cases. In contrast, new unwed fathers are highly motivated and are likely to take advantage of the services that fatherhood programs provide. They are attached to the mothers and have high hopes for their future.

The birth of the baby is a magic moment for these men and their families, and policymakers should not let this moment slip by. What this means is that we should start at birth, in the hospitals perhaps; we should offer a wide range of services to these families, and we should focus on the fathers whose relationships are in tact. These are the most motivated men, and the mothers want these men involved. The programs are likely to have a greater impact if these are the men that are receiving the services. And, I would just add, today, that I hope that this is not limited to non-custodial fathers. As I said, half of the unwed fathers are living with the mothers at birth. It would be a shame to say to these men, "You can't

get any help unless you don't live with the mother." Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement follows:]

**Statement of Sara McLanahan, Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs,  
Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey**

Madam Chair and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this important piece of legislation. I have come here to tell you about some findings from a major new study of unwed parents that my colleagues and I are conducting. I believe our study has important implications for the design of fatherhood initiatives. As you know, unwed parents and their children are the fastest growing families in the United States, accounting for one third of all births in 1997. Unfortunately, very little is known about these families, and hardly anything is known about the fathers. Our study is designed to remedy this situation. We begin at the hospitals by interviewing mothers soon after they give birth. Next we interview the fathers, either at the hospitals or someplace else, as soon as we can find them. And finally, we plan to follow both parents for at least four years, to study the relationships in these *fragile families*, and to learn how government policies affect their lives.

Today I want to talk to you about our findings from two cities—Austin, Texas and Oakland, California. These are two very different cities in terms of their policy environments and population characteristics. And yet we are finding very similar patterns among new unwed parents in both places. Eventually we will have data from 20 cities, and our sample will be representative of all new unwed parents in large U.S. cities. I predict that what is true for Austin and Oakland will be true for the rest of the country.

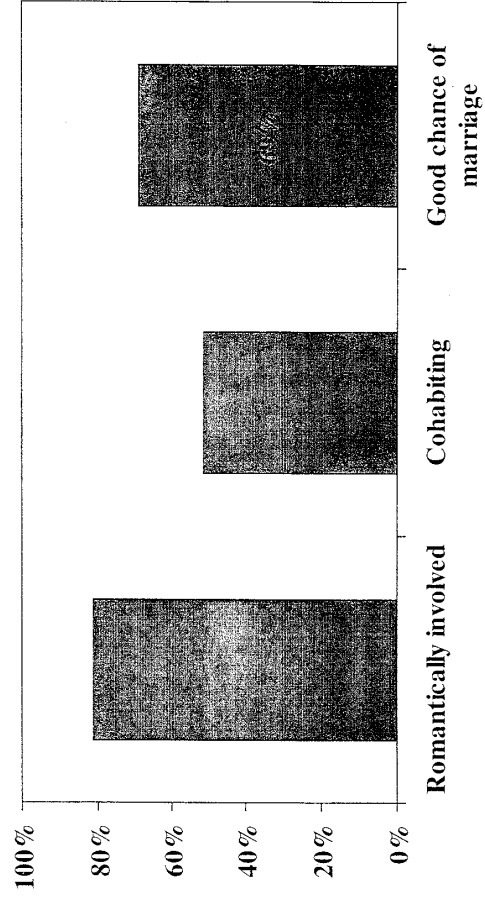
I want to make three points. First, I want to emphasize that the vast majority of unwed parents are highly committed to each other and to their children, at least at birth. Over half of the parents in our study live together, and 80 percent are romantically involved. Nearly 70 percent say their chances of marriage are at least fifty-fifty. With respect to the children, 86 percent of the mothers are planning to put the father's name on the birth certificate, 78 percent of the fathers provided support to the mother during the pregnancy, and over 90 percent of the mothers want the fathers to help raise the child. Clearly, these figures belie the myths that unwed mothers do not know who the fathers are, or that unwed fathers do not care about their children. The challenge for policy makers is to nourish rather than undermine these commitments.

My second point is that most unwed fathers are not in a good position to support their new families. Nearly 40 percent of the men in our study have no high school degree, and only 20 percent have any education beyond high school. Almost 20 percent are not employed at a regular job, and those who do work have very low earnings. Some of the fathers have personal problems as well. Eight percent have problems with drugs or alcohol, and 7 percent are physically abusive to the mothers. Four percent were in jail or prison at the time of our interview. In sum, despite their good intentions, many of the fathers in our study have serious handicaps—both economic and personal—and they will need a lot of help if they are going to maintain stable families.

My last point speaks directly to the design of fatherhood initiatives. I believe these programs can make a difference, *if* they are target the right men. As you know, the *Parents' Fair Share* program produced disappointing results. Fathers in the experimental group ended up paying more child support than fathers in the control group. But their earnings and employment did not improve. These results are not so surprising. Previous evaluations have shown that improving the prospects of men with low skills and low education is a difficult, if not impossible, task. The people who run these programs will tell you that a major reason they fail is that the men who participate in them are not motivated and do not stick with the program. The fathers who participated in Parents Fair Share program had limited skills, and their motivation was poor. Most were estranged from their children when they entered the program, and some participated in lieu of going to jail.

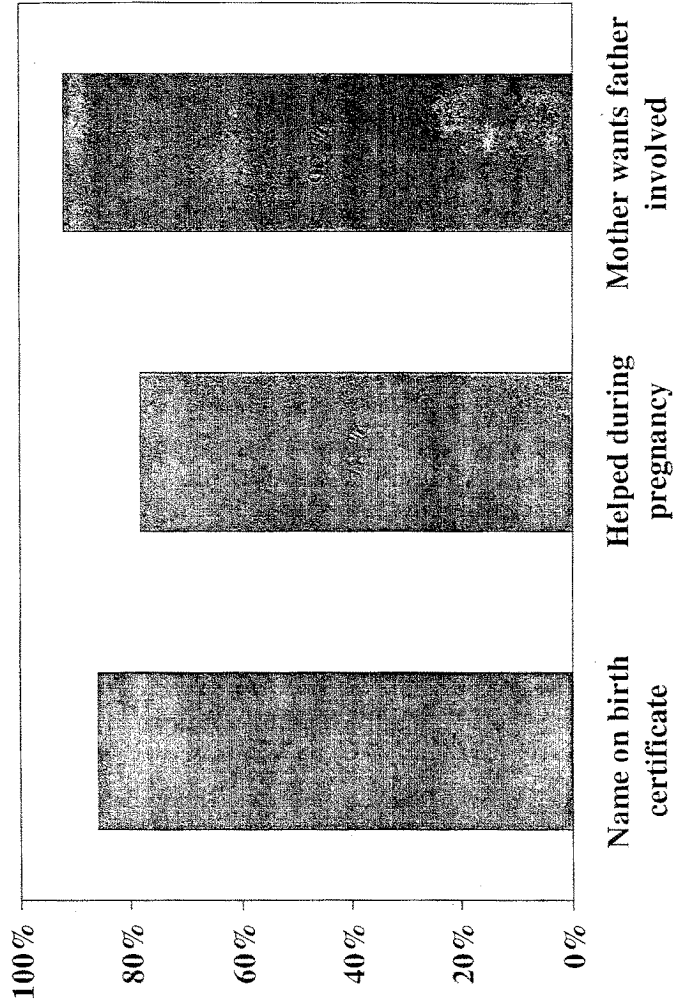
In contrast, new unwed fathers are highly motivated and are likely to take advantage of the services that fatherhood programs provide. They are attached to the mothers and have high hopes for their future. The birth of the baby is a "magic moment" for these men and their families, and policy makers should not let this moment slip by.

## Father-Mother Relationships



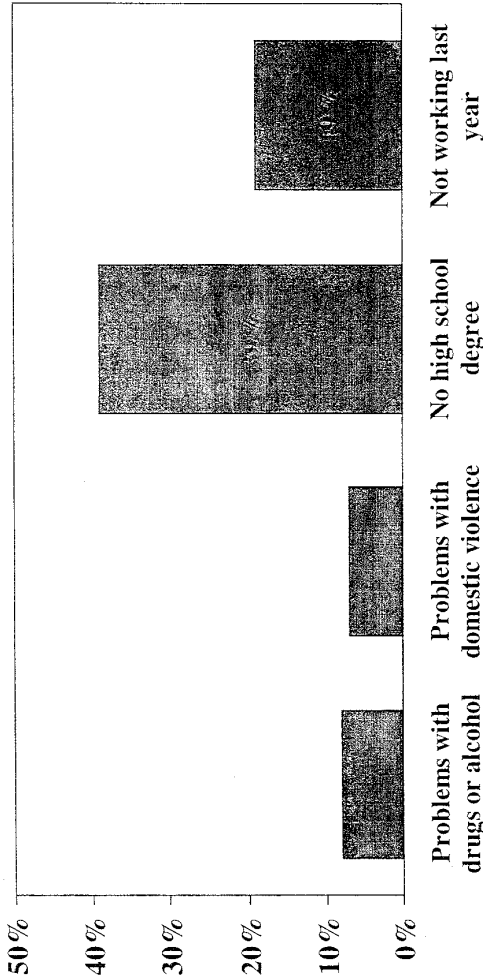
Note: Data are taken from the study of Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing

## Fathers' Involvement with Baby



Note: Data are taken from the study of Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing

## Fathers' Capabilities



Note: Data are taken from the study of Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much; very interesting testimony.

Mr. Horn.

**STATEMENT OF WADE F. HORN, PH.D., PRESIDENT, NATIONAL FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE, GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND**

Mr. HORN. Thank you very much, Madam Chair and Members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate this invitation to address the issue of fatherhood promotion. There are five things we ought to do if we are serious about promoting fathers in the lives of children. First, our culture needs to send a more compelling message about the critical role that men play as fathers. Currently, fathers are seen as nice to have around; useful as a second pair of hands, and, certainly, their money is important, but we don't generally, accept that fathers are important also as nurturers, disciplinarians, role models, teachers, and so forth.

One way to change the cultural understanding about the importance of fathers is through the use of public education campaigns. Over the last 3 years, the National Fatherhood Initiative has been implementing a series of national public service announcement campaigns emphasizing the important role that fathers play in the lives of their kids. To date, this public service campaign has garnered in excess of \$100 million in donated broadcast time.

I know there are those who “pooh-pooh” the importance of public education campaigns. However, an independent evaluation of one particular campaign we implemented in the State of Virginia suggests otherwise. This evaluation, performed by researchers at the University of Virginia, found that after just 1 year, 40,000 fathers in Virginia were spending more time with their kids as a result of seeing these ads and 100,000 non-fathers reported reaching out to support or encourage a father in their community, also as a result of this campaign.

Second, we need to implement not only a pro-father but a pro-marriage policy. All available evidence suggests that the most effective pathway to an involved, committed, and responsible father is marriage. Research consistently documents that unmarried men tend, over time, to become disconnected, both financially and psychologically, from their children. If we want to increase the proportion of children growing up with involved and committed fathers, we will have to increase the number of children growing up with their married fathers. By emphasizing the need to increase the number of kids living with real live, in-the-home, married dads, I don't mean to imply that we should toss divorce or unwed fathers overboard. We don't have a father to spare in this country. We ought to work with divorced and unwed fathers. But at the same time we ought to be clear that married fatherhood is the ideal. We need to be clear about that for both the current generation of fathers and for the next generation of fathers. For their children's sake, we need to be clear that we expect that men will father children within the context of marriage and that we stand ready to support them when they do.

One way to strengthen marriage, particularly in low-income communities, is to expand participation in Welfare-to-Work employment programs to include the broader population of low-income males, not only as a means to increase their own life prospects but also as a means to increase their marriageability. There is actually a literature in the psychological field called “Mate Selectivity” where we look at what makes somebody attractive as a marital partner. What we find is that women, and particularly low-income women, do not find men attractive as marital partners if they perceive those men's economic prospects to be lower than their own. If we expect to increase the marriageability of these low-income men, we need to expand their economic opportunities so that they will, in fact, be more attractive as marital partners to women in their communities.

In expanding employment services to low-income males, we should be careful, however, not to condition receipt of services upon having fathered a child outside of wedlock. To do so, would only serve to introduce perverse incentives for men to father children out of wedlock in much the same way that the old AFDC system



provided perverse incentives for women to bear children out of wedlock.

Third, we need a public policy that supports financially the growing number of community-based organizations interested in implementing a local fatherhood program. Just 5 years ago, at the founding of the National Fatherhood Initiative, we could barely find 100 fatherhood programs around the country. Today, we stopped counting at 2,000. There are a lot of fatherhood programs out there, but most are operating on shoestring budgets; some on no budgets at all. We need to provide financial support for those programs in order to ensure that the fatherhood movement, this expanding field of fatherhood intervention, does not collapse.

Fourth, we need to provide community-based organizations with access to information, training, and technical assistance. Money is not sufficient. They also need to know what model programs work, and the effectiveness of those programs. They need to be trained in effective ways of reaching fathers.

And, finally, while supporting fathers, we can't forget the importance of supporting children growing up in fatherless households. Four out of ten children tonight will go to sleep in a home in which their father does not also live. Those children need our support as much as the fathers do. When a father is not around, we need to reach out to these fatherless children. We need to teach fatherless boys what it means to be a responsible man, and we need to teach fatherless daughters what to demand from men in their lives.

The good news is we are starting to see for the first time in the last 30 years a leveling off of the number of kids growing up in father-absent households. I believe that with concerted effort we can actually start to reverse the trend, not just stem the tide of fatherless families. But, doing so will require that we stand firm on the issue of marriage, for marriage—imperfect as it may be—is clearly the most effective pathway to a lifetime father. Simply put, effective public policy means encouraging more skilled fathering, more work, and more marriages. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement follows:]

**Statement of Wade F. Horn, Ph.D., President, National  
Fatherhood Initiative, Gaithersburg, Maryland**

My name is Wade F. Horn, Ph.D. I am a clinical child psychologist and President of the National Fatherhood Initiative, an organization whose mission is to improve the well-being of children by increasing the number of children growing up with an involved, responsible and loving father. Formerly, I served as Commissioner for Children, Youth and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and served as a member of the National Commission on Children, the National Commission on Childhood Disability, and the U.S. Advisory Board on Welfare Indicators. I appreciate this invitation to testify on promising approaches to promoting fatherhood.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF FATHERLESSNESS

The family is the primary institution through which we protect and nurture our children, and upon which free societies depend for establishing social order and promoting individual liberty and fulfillment. However, over the past several decades the United States has been experiencing a dramatic decline in the institution of marriage and reliance on two-parent families to raise children. Even more precisely, what we have been experiencing has been a decline of fatherhood, for when marriages fail, or when children are born out of wedlock, it is almost always fathers who are absent. The absence of fathers has, in turn, severely increased the life risks faced by their children.

Almost 75 percent of American children living in single-parent families will experience poverty before they turn eleven-years-old, compared to only 20 percent of children in two-parent families<sup>1</sup>. Children who grow up absent their fathers are also more likely to fail at school or to drop out<sup>2</sup>, experience behavioral or emotional problems requiring psychiatric treatment<sup>3</sup>, engage in early sexual activity<sup>4</sup>, and develop drug and alcohol problems<sup>5</sup>.

Children growing up with absent fathers are especially likely to experience violence. They are three times more likely to commit suicide as adolescents<sup>6</sup> and to be victims of child abuse or neglect<sup>7</sup>. Violent criminals are also overwhelmingly males who grew up without fathers, including up to 60 percent of rapists<sup>8</sup>, 75 percent of adolescents charged with murder<sup>9</sup>, and 70 percent of juveniles in state reform institutions<sup>10</sup>.

In light of these data, noted developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner has concluded:

Controlling for factors such as low income, children growing up in [father absent] households are at a greater risk for experiencing a variety of behavioral and educational problems, including extremes of hyperactivity and 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 the so-called 'teenage syndrome' of behaviors that tend to hang together—smoking, drinking, early and frequent sexual experience, and in the more extreme cases, drugs, suicide, vandalism, violence, and criminal acts.<sup>11</sup>

#### THE HISTORIC ROLE OF THE FATHER IN PUBLIC POLICY

Since the 1950's, the fathers' role in public policy has been mostly about paternity establishment and child support enforcement. This is not, of course, without merit. Any man who fathers a child ought to be held financially responsible for that child. But as important as paternity establishment and child support enforcement may be, they are by themselves unlikely to substantially improve the well-being of children for several reasons.

First, paternity establishment does not equal child support. In fact, only one in four single women with children living below the poverty line receive any child support from the non-custodial father<sup>12</sup>. Some unwed fathers, especially in low-income communities, may lack the financial resources to provide economically for their children. These men may not be so much "deadbeat," as "deadbroke."

Second, even if paternity establishment led to a child support award, the average level of child support (about \$3,400 per year<sup>13</sup>) is unlikely to move large numbers of children out of poverty. Some may move out of poverty marginally. But, absent changes in family structure or workforce attachment, moving from poverty to near poverty is not associated with significant improvements in child outcomes<sup>14</sup>.

Third, an exclusive emphasis on child support enforcement may only drive these men farther away from their children. As word circulates within low-income communities that cooperating with paternity establishment but failing to comply with child support orders may result in imprisonment or revocation of one's driver's license, many may simply choose to become less involved with their children. Thus, the unintended consequence of an exclusive focus on child support enforcement may be to decrease, not increase, the number of children growing up with an involved father.

Finally, a narrow focus on child support enforcement ignores the many non-economic contributions that fathers make to the well-being of their children. While the provision of economic support is certainly important, it is neither the only nor the most important role that fathers play. If we want fathers to be more than just money machines, we will need a public policy that supports their work as nurturers, disciplinarians, mentors, moral instructors and skill coaches, and not just as economic providers.

If paternity establishment and child support enforcement by themselves are not the answer, then what is?

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A PRO-FATHER PUBLIC POLICY

*First, our culture needs to send a more compelling message to men as to the critical role they play in the lives of their children.* Currently, fathers are generally seen as "nice to have around" and as a source of economic support, but are not generally understood as contributing much that is particularly unique or irreplaceable to the well-being of their children. To counter this rather limited view of the importance of fathers, public policy must communicate the critical role fathers play—as nurturers, as disciplinarians, as teachers, and as role models—in the healthy develop-

ment of their children. One way to do this is through the funding of public education campaigns.

Over the past several years, the National Fatherhood Initiative has developed and implemented a series of public education campaigns designed to highlight the importance of fathers to the well-being of children, families and communities. Working in conjunction with the Ad Council, we developed and distributed nationally a series of TV, radio, and print public service announcements (PSAs) designed to raise awareness that fathers make unique and irreplaceable contributions to the lives of their children, and that collectively we need to do more to encourage and support men to be good and responsible fathers. To date, this PSA campaign has garnered in excess of \$100 million in donated broadcasting time.

We also developed, and distributed nationally, a series of radio PSAs featuring a mix of celebrities and experts designed to remind fathers how important it is for them to spend time with their children. Among those who appear in these PSAs are General Colin Powell (Ret.), Vice President Al Gore, former HUD Secretary Jack Kemp, former U.S. Senators Dan Coats and Bill Bradley, U.S. Representatives J.C. Watts and Steve Largent, and Penn State football coach Joe Paterno. We also developed a state-wide public education campaign promoting responsible fatherhood in partnership with the Virginia Department of Health.

For those who may believe that PSA campaigns do not have much of an effect, an independent evaluation of the public education campaign we developed for the state of Virginia suggests otherwise. This evaluation, conducted by researchers at the University of Virginia, found (1) nearly 1 of every 3 adult Virginians could recall having seen the PSAs; (2) 40,000 fathers reported they were spending more time with their children as a result of seeing the ads; (3) and 100,000 non-fathers reported reaching out to support or encourage a father in their community.

*Second, a pro-father public policy must also be a pro-marriage policy.* All available evidence suggests that the most effective pathway to involved, committed and responsible fatherhood is marriage. Research consistently documents that unmarried fathers, whether through divorce or out-of-wedlock fathering, tend over time to become disconnected, both financially and psychologically, from their children. Forty percent of children in father absent homes have not seen their father in at least a year. Of the remaining 60 percent, only one in five sleeps even one night per month in the father's home. Overall, only one in six sees their father an average of once or more per week<sup>15</sup>. More than half of all children who don't live with their fathers have never even been in their father's home<sup>16</sup>.

Unwed fathers are particularly unlikely to stay connected to their children over time. Whereas 57 percent of unwed fathers are visiting their child at least once per week during the first two years of their child's life, by the time their child reaches 7½ years of age, that percentage drops to less than 25 percent<sup>17</sup>. Indeed, approximately 75 percent of men who are not living with their children at the time of their birth never subsequently live with them<sup>18</sup>.

Even when unwed fathers are cohabitating with the mother at the time of their child's birth, they are very unlikely to stay involved in their children's lives over the long term. Although a quarter of non-marital births occur to cohabitating couples, only four out of ten cohabitating unwed fathers ever go on to marry the mother of their children, and those that do are more likely to eventually divorce than men who father children within marriage<sup>19</sup>. Remarriage, or, in cases of an unwed father, marriage to someone other than the child's mother, makes it especially unlikely that a non-custodial father will remain in contact with his children<sup>20</sup>.

The inescapable conclusion is this: if we want to increase the proportion of children growing up with involved and committed fathers, we will have to increase the number of children living with their *married* fathers. Unmarried men, and especially unwed fathers, are simply unlikely to stay in contact with their children over the long term.

By emphasizing the need to increase the number of children living with married dads, I do not mean to imply that divorced or unwed fathers should be tossed overboard. Children need their fathers. The fact that their father does not reside in the same household does not lessen that need. But in working with divorced and never-married fathers, we should not shy away from the ideal of married fatherhood. To do otherwise sends an ambiguous message to the next generation of fathers. For their future children's sakes, we need to be clearer that men should wait until they are married before fathering children, and once married, they should do everything they can to ensure their marriage stays strong and vital.

One way to strengthen marriage, especially within low-income communities, is to expand participation in welfare-to-work employment programs to include the broader population of low-income males—not only as a means to increase their own life prospects, but also as a means to increase their marriageability. Research has found

that the availability of a suitable potential husband, primarily defined as being employed and not in jail or prison, had a greater effect on marriage and nonmarital fertility than did AFDC benefit levels<sup>21</sup>. This literature indicates clearly that if men are employed, they are more attractive as potential marital partners.

In expanding employment services to low-income males, however, government should be careful *not* to condition receipt of services upon having fathered a child out-of-wedlock. To do so may only serve to introduce perverse incentives for men to father children out-of-wedlock, in much the same way that AFDC provided perverse incentives for women to bear children out-of-wedlock. The cultural and public policy message must be this: we stand ready to assist low-income males who play by the rules and wait to have children until after they are married.

*Third, public policy needs to do more to support the growing number of community-based organizations interested in implementing local fatherhood programs.* At the founding of the National Fatherhood Initiative just five years ago, we could barely find a hundred community-based fatherhood programs. Today, that number has swelled to well over two thousand. Nearly everywhere one turns in every part of the country, there seems to be a new interest in implementing fatherhood outreach, support, and skill building programs.

That's the good news. The bad news is that the fatherhood field is still quite fragile. Again and again, we hear from practitioners of the need to build greater capacity within the emerging fatherhood movement. Building capacity requires additional resources. Additional resources means money.

While many private foundations today talk a good talk about the need to reach out to and support fathers, far too few actually provide any resources to do so. Public funding for fatherhood promotion, support and skill building programs is practically non-existent. Consequently, most fatherhood programs today exist on shoestring budgets. Some on no budgets at all. Without additional resources, the nascent fatherhood movement is likely to fail.

In addition, we need more and better evaluations of existing fatherhood programs. The truth is we don't know what works best and for whom. While there are many promising approaches, no approach has yet been proven, using generally accepted scientific evaluation methods, to yield its intended effects, especially in the long-term. Whatever government decides to do in terms of fatherhood promotion, it must also commit to providing adequate resources to determine the effectiveness of those efforts.

*Fourth, community-based organizations also need access to information, training, and technical assistance in what works.* Providing funding is not enough. Local, community-based organizations also need information on effective fatherhood outreach, support, and skills building programs. The National Fatherhood Initiative has been providing this kind of information, resource material, and technical assistance through its National Resource Center. To date, NFI's National Resource Center has helped to establish well over 200 local, community-based fatherhood programs. Every day, we receive additional requests from community-based organizations interested in establishing a local fatherhood program or initiative. We are currently seeking expanded resources in order for us to even more effectively meet this need.

*Fifth, while supporting fathers, we can not forget the importance of supporting children growing up in father absent households.* The fact is that nearly 4 out of every 10 children in America today—nearly 24 million overall—are growing up in a home in which their father does not live. In working with fathers, we can not forget the importance of reaching out to the fatherless. Although providing a fatherless child with an adult male mentor is not the same thing as providing a real live, in-the-home, love-the-mother, father, it can be very helpful in teaching fatherless boys what it means to be a responsible man, and in teaching fatherless daughters what to demand from men in their lives.

#### MODEL FEDERAL LEGISLATION TO COMBAT FATHERLESSNESS

Given these recommendations for a pro-father public policy, what would effective federal legislation look like?

*First, federal legislation should provide support for public education campaigns to build awareness that fathers matter and that the most important thing a father can do is to be involved in his children's lives, emotionally as well as financially.*

*Second, federal legislation should provide financial support for a variety of ways of working with fathers, both because fathers come in many varieties, and because we do not yet know what models for providing fathers with outreach, support, and skills are the most effective. And, of course, what works with one kind of father in one type of situation, may not work with another kind of father in a different situation. Federal legislation while setting certain priorities, should not hamstring local*

programs into one particular fatherhood intervention model or working with one type of father. Federal legislation should be especially careful not to condition services to having fathered a child out-of-wedlock, as the Clinton Administration's welfare-to-work proposal seems to do.

*Third, federal legislation should require that any program funded through the legislation should promote married fatherhood as the ideal.* This does not mean that local programs should restrict their efforts to working only with married fathers. We must, and should, work with unwed and divorced fathers to help them become and remain involved in their children's lives. We don't have a father to spare. But at the same time, it does children no favor to pretend that unwed or divorced fatherhood is the equivalent of married fatherhood. We need to be clear that the best situation is for children to grow up with a real live, in the home, love the mother, married father. Federal legislation should support this goal.

*Fourth, federal legislation should provide support for a National Resource Center and Clearinghouse* to provide local, grassroots organizations with the resources, training, and technical assistance they need to provide effective services. Funds should also be made available to ensure that local programs are adequately trained in outcome based measurement so that they can provide more than testimonials as to their effectiveness.

There are, of course, those who would object to such a bill. First, there are some who believe government should not explicitly promote marriage. Government, these critics will maintain, has no business promoting personal "values." Instead, they insist, government policy ought to be neutral when it comes to marriage.

This argument might be persuasive if not for the fact that for the past thirty years government policy, rather than being neutral, has actually punished marriage. For example, when two-earner couples head for the altar instead of cohabiting, their taxes actually go up, costing many middle-income couples \$1000 or more.

Things are even worse for low-income couples. In fact, should a single mother on welfare choose to marry a low-wage earner and, in doing so, give her children a real live in-the-home dad instead of a child support check, her benefits are frequently reduced, if not eliminated. According to calculations by Eugene Steuerle of the Urban Institute, when a man working full-time at a minimum wage job marries a mother on welfare with two children, the new family's combined earnings plus benefits would be \$3,862 less than if the couple did not marry and the woman stayed on welfare<sup>22</sup>. Hardly an incentive to get or stay married.

This wouldn't be so bad if marriage didn't matter. But it does. And not just a little. It matters a lot. Children fare much better when raised in a married, intact, two-parent household. In addition, research indicates that both married men and married women are happier, healthier, and wealthier than their unmarried counterparts. Furthermore, the best indicator of the violent crime rate in a community is not race, ethnicity or even income, but the prevalence of marriage. Given that marriage is good for children, adults and society, public policy should not shy away from encouraging more of it.

A second objection will be that government ought not to be in the business of social engineering. But the truth is that in some low-income communities, fatherhood and marriage have nearly disappeared. And not just recently; but for many generations.

How in the world does a young male growing up in a fourth generation fatherless household and in a community largely without dads of the married variety, come to understand what responsible fatherhood and marriage are all about? How does simply dismantling government teach these young men the skills to be good, involved and committed dads? And what of the children of these fathers? Do we just sit back and say, "Gee, you should have chosen your pop better."

Given the clear connection between fatherlessness and such social ills as poverty, crime, educational failure, and substance abuse, we can not afford social indifference on this issue. Government can not solve all of our nation's ills, but what it can do it must. The stakes for our nation's children are too high for government to be absent on this issue.

I want to be clear. I'm not suggesting that merely passing a piece of legislation is going to magically transform our increasingly fatherless nation into a nation of real fathers and good husbands. But it would be a start. And start we must, for until we solve this crisis of fatherlessness we will be a nation in decline.

#### CONCLUSION

There exists today no greater single threat to the long-term well-being of children, our communities or our nation, than the increasing number of children being raised without a committed, responsible and loving father. Our nation is known for its opti-

mism and fondness for reforms of many sorts that promise to make society safer, stronger, and richer. Yet, all social reforms we have attempted in the past, or may attempt in the future, will likely pale in comparison to the good that would come if we could turn back the tide of fatherlessness. This tide will not be turned easily, and certainly not by changes in public policy alone. But public policy can have a significant effect upon how potential parents view marriage and parental responsibilities.

The good news is that we are starting to see, for the first time in over thirty years, a leveling off of the number of children growing up in father absent homes. I believe that with concerted effort we can actually reverse the trend toward fatherlessness within the next five years. Not simply stop the rise in fatherlessness, but reverse it. Doing so will require that we stand firm on the issue of marriage, for marriage is the most likely—not perfect, but certainly the most likely—pathway to a lifetime father.

Simply put: children need their fathers, and men need marriage to be good fathers. Effective public policy means encouraging more skilled fathering, more work, and more marriages.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this testimony, and would be pleased to answer any questions you might have concerning my testimony.

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Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much. I appreciate the testimony of the panelists; it was excellent.

Mr. Uhalde, I certainly agree that we have an opportunity to work in a bipartisan fashion to accomplish some important objectives this session. I was very pleased that the Administration is as interested as the legislators are on this subject, but I did want to ask you—and also I appreciated in your testimony the many examples you give of programs that the Labor Department has had contact with. It does seem to me that the Labor Department is well suited to help us with what is a fundamental issue here; that is, how do we help these young men into employment, and how do we improve their employability and enable them to get better paying jobs? And, I think you have many new tools, including the more flexible job training programs that we have provided in recent years to help you do that.

But, you are not—you have not been traditionally associated with the level of human services and family services that these programs clearly provide, and in your testimony—I can't seem to find exactly where, although, actually, I should open this question to Mr. Berlin—as well, this issue of coordination; you know, to get a whole new Department of Labor involved in services that primarily the Department of Health and Human Services has provided—and in my State, I know, the biggest problem in welfare reform has been the turf issues. So, I am concerned about taking the Welfare-to-Work program and trying to turn it into an employment human service program within the Department of Labor.

Mr. Berlin, states in his testimony, "The experience demonstrates that it is possible to build agency partnerships, the agency partnerships required to deliver services to this population." Of course, it is possible. In the 1970's, I was chairman of the Family Services Child Guidance Clinic in my own community. There were three children's services groups in my little tiny town of 70,000, and we could only coordinate verbally and on paper. But over the decades, now, we are coordinating better, but I hate to pour a lot

of money into a new program when the agency relationships and the coordinated agreements are still embryonic after, really, now, probably in the last 4 years since welfare reform, the most dramatic incentive to collaborate and cooperate that really has ever been amongst us from any level of government. So, I am concerned, and I have been told not to ask this question, raise this hornet's nest, but I am really concerned about getting fatherhood into the Department of Labor. [Laughter.]

I am also uncontrollable, so, I mean, you just—[Laughter.]

But, I do learn from experience; that is why I hold hearings.

Mr. UHALDE. Well, I guess I would start by saying we are in the fatherhood business. We are not getting into it. In the Workforce Investment Act and, before it, the Job Training Partnership Act, we serve fathers; we serve males. Our issue has been with relatively low-income males and with dislocated workers. We have served many, many hundreds of thousands of them over the years. Except for particular efforts, we have not focused our attention on making the link with child support enforcement agencies to make sure that those increases in earnings that fathers had achieved who were non-custodial are translated into child support payments. So, we are about the business of providing better employment and training services for males; that is a principal part of our business.

Second, the Workforce Investment Act that recently passed on a bipartisan basis by the Congress and was signed in August of last year, creates a workforce investment system and one-stop career center that is, again, about 14 different Government agencies and programs formally agreeing to partner to provide services from vocational rehabilitation, adult basic education and literacy, TANF, Welfare-to-Work. So—

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. I appreciate that, and I—

Mr. UHALDE [continuing]. This has to be our business.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. I do appreciate that change is occurring. It is also occurring very slowly. Connecticut was one of the States that got one of the demonstration projects from the Department of Labor about a decade ago to create one-stop centers, and they really had made a dramatic difference, and they provided a wonderful platform from which to enlarge the services under welfare reform. But, for example, even in your testimony, you say early intervention is critical and Ms. McLanahan talks about early intervention being at the hospital and shows charts about how 80 percent at birth are romantically involved, but we lose that so early, and while you can be there for the education services—I mean, for the employment services, for the training services that should be integral to this, it is sort of breathtaking to imagine the Department of Labor running the social service programs for a holistic approach to family development problems starting at the hospital.

Mr. UHALDE. Well, child support would also—and in the legislation that Mr. Cardin has introduced—be a party to it. We would be active partners in that process and the design of that program.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Well, we will discuss this much more, because we have lots of questions and another big panel, and I know we are going to hear testimony from those who



want to work with the child support enforcement agency—which is the natural nexus for fathers for this panoply of services.

But, I would just have to say that I am very concerned about the development of parallel service systems. In my experience, we have got to do far better in child protective services in Connecticut where we have a number of waivers. We are getting much family focused, much more flexible, better integrated, and I am concerned. I do think you are doing a wonderful job developing employment services, career advancement services, and the next round of welfare evolution has got to be able to help people get higher paying jobs. And, you certainly are focusing on that and developing, I think, some tools to do those things, but I really hate to distract you into being in the hospital, trying to deal with the fathers in terms of parenting skills and involvement, and I also was very surprised—but I will have to come back to this later—that Mrs. McLanahan says only 10 percent of the fathers had drug problems. So, my concept of how we rewrite the Welfare-to-Work grant is, at this point, probably quite different from yours, and I looking forward to working with you on that.

I yield to my colleague, Mr. Cardin.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you. I am having a hard time trying to reconcile some of Mrs. McLanahan's numbers with common observations as well as one of the observations by Mr. Berlin. And, that is if we have such a relationship between the father and mother; that is, 78 percent of the fathers helping the mother during pregnancy and 81 percent being romantically involved, and yet Mr. Berlin makes the observation in his report that one of the problems was getting non-custodial parents to stress skepticism about the goals and services of PFS based on their perception that the child support system was stacked against them. So, if the fathers believe the child support system is stacked against them, one observation could be because the monies paid through child support rarely goes directly to the family; maybe that is the explanation. What are the reasons that fathers don't trust the child support system?

Mr. BERLIN. Well, one of the things that often happens either soon after Sara's single mother leaves the hospital, or while she is still there, the hospital completes an application and enrolls her in Medicaid, so Medicaid can be billed for the cost of child birth. The father, then, when he establishes paternity is immediately saddled with these Medicaid costs in the form of thousands of dollars of child support debts. Fathers, in association with child support, start off in debt and they are being hounded for life by the child support system to pay that debt and they face the risk of being jailed for failure to appear at a hearing on child support. Moreover, the payments fathers make typically go to the welfare system rather than to their children.

Mr. CARDIN. How fast have these numbers dropped? Ms. McLanahan, do you know how fast the father's and mother's relationship deteriorates once the child is born?

Ms. MCLANAHAN. We don't know, really, and that is why we are doing this study. I mean, we have got some estimates that will show you sort of years later that their fathers aren't around—we gave some of those numbers earlier—but I think another big difference between what I am saying and what Gordon is talking

about is he is talking about men who are not with their children; who have not paid child support; who have then been ordered by the judge to participate in this program, and I am talking about the birth period. So, it is a different population of men. We are in the field right now to reinterview these families in Oakland and Austin. We will see how many are still around.

Mr. CARDIN. Well, one number, 52 percent that you have cohabitating, is certainly radically different than what the statistics that we have had on the number of families that are participating in TANF being single-parent families. So, this is—we don't have half our caseload coming into the two-parent programs.

Ms. McLANAHAN. Half of these families are on TANF.

Mr. CARDIN. But half—

Mr. BERLIN. But half are not.

Ms. McLANAHAN. But half are not. So, that is the point. This would be a preventive initiative too. These families aren't all on TANF, partly, because the fathers are there, but the fact that 80 percent of them have only a high school degree or less tells you about their ability to make it.

Mr. CARDIN. So, you are giving us the whole universe here.

Ms. McLANAHAN. I am giving you—this is a representative sample of all non-marital births.

Mr. CARDIN. OK.

Ms. McLANAHAN. And, these—

Mr. CARDIN. Fifty percent of these births will end up receiving some form of public assistance?

Ms. McLANAHAN. They already are receiving—50 percent are receiving public assistance at the time of the birth of the child, and these numbers are consistent with what demographers are now finding. A decade ago, it looked like about 30 percent of new, unwed parents were cohabitating; the number in 5 years was up to 40 percent, and now it looks like it is closer to 50 percent. So, we have this big increase in cohabitation and births occurring to cohabiting parents but sort of going along outside the welfare population, but many of these people are in the welfare population, and some of them will go onto welfare.

Mr. CARDIN. Back to Mr. Berlin on the attitude of the non-custodial parent toward the child support system. There is a mistrust because the first contacts are confrontational, adversarial?

Mr. BERLIN. Too often, the child support system is saying to fathers that they ought to establish paternity, "You ought to do the right thing, but if you lose your job, instead of adjusting the amount owed, we will continue adding to the amount of money that you are going to owe the child support system, so arrearages keep building." We had a lot of examples of fathers who were paying regularly. They called the system and said, "I just lost my job, can you cut my order back?" And, the system said, "No." So, part of our mission in Parents' Fair Share was getting the child support system to be more responsive to the actual ability of fathers to pay.

Mr. CARDIN. Let me just make one more observation. It appears from all of your testimony that one of the areas that we need to concentrate is follow-up services to the father who may be working but the prospect for long-term employment is not very good, and the level of income that the father is receiving is not very high, so

that we can't just say that we have a success when the father is working; we need to have services that follow the father so that he can have more predictable income. I guess, we all agree with that.

Ms. McLanahan. Yes.

Mr. UHALDE. Yes, and I would just say that is not unlike with the custodial parents, as well, especially with a good economy; it is keeping jobs and increasing the earning capacity, and that is difficult, because it means mixing work and learning while people are working, and we are learning how to do that. On-the-job training—high support on-the-job training was one initiative for that, and we need to keep finding ways and techniques to do it, so we can grow these earnings.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. English.

Mr. ENGLISH. Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Horn, welcome; it is good to hear from you again. In examining your testimony, I noticed that you state that a pro-father public policy must also be a pro-marriage policy. In your view, can a well-designed program aimed at fathers increase marriage rates, and is that a reasonable outcome that we should demand of these programs?

Mr. HORN. That remains to be seen, because most programs don't try to do that; some do. Charles Ballard's program, for example, tries to work to move a couple toward marriage, so does Jeff Johnson's program. Efforts to evaluate those programs are too new to know precisely the degree to which we can achieve success in this area—and I will let them speak about their programs in the second panel—but I think it has to be a part of what we do.

The idea that cohabitation rates are going up is not such great news if, in the long term, the couples break up, and the father disappears from a child's life. As a child psychologist, I know from clinical experience, but there is also research evidence to back this up, that it is actually worse for a child to establish an attachment relationship with a father in the early years of the child's life only to have that father disappear when the child enters elementary school. The fact that we have higher rates of cohabitation, does not necessarily translate into more permanent relationships between the child and the father. So, I think marriage has to be a piece of what we do.

One obvious question is, why aren't they getting married? If 80 percent of unwed, low-income couples are romantically involved and 52 percent are cohabiting, why aren't they getting married? I think one of the reasons is that we never bring up the topic. When was the last time you went into a welfare office and saw a poster on a wall that said marriage was a good thing? When was the last time you went to a welfare office and they had brochures available providing referrals to pre-marital counseling sessions? How many welfare offices even ask the couple: "Are you thinking about getting married? What is standing in your way? How can we help you with that?" We see these kinds of questions as off-limits when it comes to what the welfare offices are intending to do. I think we have to start bringing up the topic and encouraging people to get married particularly when they are telling us that they want to.

Mr. ENGLISH. Dr. Horn, in your testimony—you express concern about programs that condition receipt of services upon having fa-

thered a child out of wedlock. How do you design an intervention, in your view, that avoids that problem?

Mr. HORN. This concern was heightened for me at a fatherhood conference a couple of years ago. Someone brought in a poster from New York, and the poster said, "Unwed father? Do we have a program for you, including a state-of-the-art physical fitness facility," and everybody applauded and said, "That is a wonderful thing. Isn't that a great program?" And, I sat there, and I said, "Where is the program for the guy who plays by the rules and doesn't father a child out of wedlock? Where is his state-of-the-art physical fitness facility?" The answer is they don't have one. I think what we have to do is target low-income communities in terms of economic employment opportunities and expanding them as opposed to targeting a specific father, a non-custodial father, particularly one who has fathered a child out of wedlock. It doesn't mean we say, "If you are an unwed father or non-custodial, you can't come and be part of this employment program." But at least we ought to say to those who aren't yet fathers but living in those same communities, "You are absolutely welcome to be a part of this program."

Mr. ENGLISH. Doctor, you called for support of a national resource center and clearinghouse. Could you offer us some details about the goals of such an organization and how it would operate?

Mr. HORN. We operate such a resource center. We get calls everyday from community-based organizations wanting to do something in the area of fatherhood promotion and intervention. They come from a variety of different perspectives; they are different types of agencies; they have access to different types of fathers, and so forth. The first goal when that phone call comes in is to help them think through what are their access points to fathers? What is their passion? What is it they can really do given their sphere of influence? If, it is a hospital administrator, you will give a very different sense about what they can do versus a school administrator versus someone who works in the child support enforcement arena versus somebody who works in a boys and girls club in an inner city. What a good resource center does is, rather than trying to fit every peg into the same shape hole, is say "What does your peg look like, and let us go find a good program that will fit that peg."

Mr. ENGLISH. Madam Chair, I am almost out of time, but I want to compliment this panel on the presentation they have made. It has certainly given us a lot of material that can be the basis for us moving forward this year, and I certainly hope we have the opportunity to do that. Thank you very much, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much. Mr. Lewis.

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Horn, Dr. Johnson, who is on the second panel, says in his testimony that poor fathers must first get jobs and take responsibility for their children before marriage makes sense. Do you agree with that or what would be your—?

Mr. HORN. I have great sympathy for the idea that we ought to help low-income men get good jobs, keep good jobs, and all of that.

I think that is very important. I, perhaps, have just a slightly different lens through which I view this issue. I think it is important that we don't reinforce the idea that unless you have a good paying job you can't be a good father to your children. What that suggests is, for example, my two brothers, who are househusbands, are not doing it right, because they are not in the paid labor force. At the same time, I recognize that a lot of men come to the table with the idea that economic provision is a central piece of what they do as fathers, and so we ought to pay attention to that. But at the same time we ought to help those men expand the notion of what they can contribute to their children by disabusing them of the notion that it is all about money, it is all about a job. One has to do that delicately; one has to do that sensitively. But it seems to me that we need to expand the understanding of men about what good fathers do and what good men have to contribute to the institution of marriage. It is not just about money; it is not just about the size of your paycheck that makes you a good husband. It is about caring for your wife; it is about supporting the wife; it is about encouraging her.

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. OK, thank you. Mr. Berlin, Dayton increased their child support payments by 50 percent. What are your ideas about why they were so successful in that?

Mr. BERLIN. It was an unusual program. First, they did have a strong partnership, and they did an extraordinary amount of outreach. Most child support workers sit at their desk and look for matches on computer screens to tell them that there is income. In Dayton, staff actually went out and knocked on people's door at the last known address and found many fathers that nobody thought could be located and got them involved in the program. Some of them were working and weren't reporting earnings that the Dayton system was not capturing. Others of them who eventually would have gone to work got into the service part of this program and went to work, and the system knew immediately when they did, and that increased the amount of child support paid.

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Yes, go ahead.

Mr. MCINNIS. Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I find the testimony interesting, but the testimony that I find most compelling on the panel here is Dr. Horn. I must admit that at the beginning I had some skepticism about a public relations effort that is going to actually enhance fatherhood, but I found the rest of your testimony so absolutely compelling that I am now wondering would you mind providing for me, say, a copy of some of the print ads or some of the things that you have done?

Mr. HORN. I would be happy to do that.

[The information had not been received at the time of printing.]

Mr. MCINNIS. I mean, maybe it works. Maybe I am—and along the same line as Ms. McLanahan has done tracking, what is the fall-off rate once the commercials stop? I mean, is there any kind of long-lasting effect as a result of this?

Mr. HORN. I will also supply you with the evaluation of our work in the State of Virginia. In just the first year of our intensive public education campaign, there were clear impacts; as I said, 40,000 fathers were now spending more time with their kids; 100,000 non-

fathers reaching out to a father in their community and providing support and encouragement. Then they stopped running the ads. A year later, there was backtracking—not completely—but there was backtracking on those results.

Anybody who works in the area of cultural and attitudinal change knows that you have to be consistent with your messages, and if you suddenly stop giving the message that marriage matters, or that fathers matters, that littering is a bad thing, there is backtracking in terms of the cultural attitudes about this stuff.

Mr. MCINNIS. As you know, the State that I represent is Colorado, and I had preplanned town meetings for the weekend which we weren't able to cancel in light of the events that took place in Colorado, but, needless to say, during these town meetings that was the topic of discussion, and of course the family issue comes up, an issue which I think is fundamental to some of the difficulties that we face. I just want to tell you, I wish I could have had you in Colorado. I think your testimony is excellent, and I appreciate all the panel, but, Dr. Horn, I found yours especially helpful to me, so I appreciate the effort you are putting into this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much, Mr. McInnis, and I thank the panel. To what extent do you all think it is important to get involved at birth?

Mr. BERLIN. I think the sooner that programs intervene the better. It is logical. In PFS, we have seen some evidence that fathers with younger children were more likely to be involved in their children's lives as a result of PFS.

Mr. HORN. I agree. I think it is critical. There is a wonderful hospital-based program called Boot Camp for New Dads that uses a father-father mentoring model, between fathers whose partners gave birth in that hospital 3 to 6 months prior and fathers who have expectant partners. It is a very nice way of teaching skills for the expectant fathers and encouraging their involvement with their children when they are young. And, what we know from developmental psychology is the more interaction between the father and the child early on, the greater the attachment between the child and the father and between the father and the child. The stronger that attachment, the less likely it is that father will fade out of that child's life. But, if you wait till the child is 6, 7, or 8 years of age and the only incentive this guy has to be involved in his child's life is that you are making him pay child support, but he doesn't have a clue who this kid is, because he has never been around the child, it is unlikely that that sort of intervention will be effective.

Mr. UHALDE. The Administration's bill, as reflected in Mr. Cardin's legislation that he introduced, recognizes both early intervention—because there is more likelihood of success with early intervention—but also focuses on the children that are in greatest need, those that are longest-term welfare recipients or approaching the time limits; 19 States of which will hit time limits this year. And, so it gives a priority to those but allows early intervention as well.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. I would be terribly, terribly concerned to get a fatherhood program in place and have it any

way mixed up with all these other dates, because then you would have program people up—I mean, this is why Welfare-to-Work hasn't worked, because you can't have program people out there and looking through these fathers to see who is part of the about to expire 3 months from—even if you open up the criteria, I am very concerned about the welfare—the whole goal of the Welfare-to-Work was to get at the longest-term welfare recipients, but a lot of the babies are being born to people that are much more recently into the system, and they would not fit into the welfare reform criteria nor should they.

So, I think we really are going to have to give a lot of attention to the fact that we may take money from Welfare-to-Work to do this, but we cannot be limited by the Welfare-to-Work focus on the adults.

Mr. UHALDE. We would agree, and our proposal doesn't limit it to that; that is correct.

Ms. MCLANAHAN. I obviously think it is a good idea. I think another appealing part of it is that the mothers want the fathers involved, and there is a lot of discussion in some of these issues when they come up about whether the father is dangerous or whether the mothers want the fathers, and about the conflict between the parents. Clearly, these data suggest that 90 percent of the mothers want these fathers involved. So, when you start early, you do not have to deal with those other issues of whether the parents are in a conflictual relationship, or whether you are actually making things worse for the family or the children.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Well, all of you have dealt with the bureaucratic structure that delivers services in this country, from the Federal Government down to the States, the local government, the non-profit sector, and I honestly think we have to take very, very, very seriously the profound problems that could emerge from trying to have something that starts in the hospital, a Department of Labor program. Now, with all due respect, and I certainly want you in there, because the husband, the male, is there and needs your services, and if you don't get at them and if we don't get this going, we can't do it without you, but it is also true that you really can't do the motherhood training, all of the things that mother needs and the father needs. We have to find a holistic approach to these units, and hope that we can help them understand what it means to be a family and also why marriage creates a more stable environment for a child.

So, I don't want turf issues to interfere with my trying to find a solution to this problem. I don't want you to want—although I know it is a natural deep-seeded and distinct that my comment will not overcome—but we have got to get the agencies out of the way while we think about what has to be done and then find a way to get you back in to do what you need to do. But, because the Welfare-to-Work money is in the Department of Labor and because this program is not going to be focused on the group that the Welfare-to-Work group was focused on, I think we have to face realistically that we are going to have to do some rewriting here, and I was pleased that the Administration got this out from under the criteria that governs the Welfare-to-Work program.

I really do respect what you do. What you do is terribly important. You are getting far better with teenagers than you ever were, and we need you, but I think we really have to think through how we get a holistic approach to these families.

The other thing that we will have to go into in more detail at some other time is this problem of health insurance and the uncovered father, since he is not covered under Medicaid, and what could we do about that? And maybe there is a way to bring him into Medicaid when he takes on his support programs until his income increases or something, but we do have to think about those things or if we do provide him with so many disincentives—I would also feel very resentful of an agency that penalized me every time I tried to do my duty.

So, thank you very much for your testimony. We do have a long way to go. This is a very important issue. We are not going to drop it, and so you better put your nose to the grindstone or your shoulder to the grindstone or something. OK, thanks.

The next panel is Charles Ballard, the founder and chief executive officer of the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization; Jeffery Johnson, the president and chief executive officer of the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership; George Gay, the pastor of UFW Baptist Church in New Britain; Robert Raesz, attorney from Austin, TX, and Vicki Turetsky, senior staff attorney, the Center for Law and Social Policy. And also Lisa Nkonoki—good, thank you; I am glad you are here—a co-founder and executive director of the Tate George Dreamshot Foundation from Newington, CT.

Mr. Ballard, would you open, please.

**STATEMENT OF CHARLES AUGUSTUS BALLARD, FOUNDER  
AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, INSTITUTE FOR RESPONSIBLE  
FATHERHOOD AND FAMILY REVITALIZATION**

Mr. BALLARD. Madam Chair, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before your Committee today. I think I am well qualified to talk on this subject. I have a 43-year-old son, a 38-year-old son, a 14-year-old son, a 12-year-old daughter, and 4½-year-old son, so I think I have had a lot of practice in this area.

I began my work with fathers 22 years ago in Cleveland, OH at a hospital, and what we discovered is that the earlier the father was involved in a pregnancy the better, not only for the child but for the mother as well. We found out that men who are involved in the pregnancy actually can increase the weight of the baby, which can reduce infant mortality. Now, I think the problem that we are facing is what I call fatherlessness, and that is a condition that is created when there is no loving, compassionate man in the home to care for his family, and of course we know what happens from this lack of family support.

Now, fatherlessness shows up in three areas: dysfunctional single fatherhood, dysfunctional divorce fatherhood, and dysfunctional married fatherhood, because we sometimes see a problem in marriages in which children are not being cared for properly. Now, even when a father provides financial care—financial support, it does not affect those statistics that I just gave you.



Now, what is the solution to this problem? No. 1, we believe that marriage—good, loving, compassionate marriages—must be supported. A man who is not married is high-risk for homicide, suicide, homelessness, educational failure, gang membership, joblessness, drug abuse, and poor health. In fact, this year, 150,000 African males, mostly fathers, are going to die a premature death—heart attacks and so on. Now, on the contrary, a man who is a good, loving, compassionate father in a marriage is not affected as much by these risk factors. Children grow up much healthier and go out of the community, out of the home, to bless the community.

No. 2, we must have those working with fathers to have a risk-free lifestyle. I indicated that this year we are going to lose over 150,000 men to high-risk diseases. Some are caused by smoking, drug use, alcoholism, and so on. And, so those who work with these individuals must themselves be drug-free, cigarette-free, as well as domestic violence-free. The staff must not only talk the talk, but the staff must walk the walk.

And, No. 3, staff must live where the people are they are servicing. I remember before integration, the problem we have today did not exist, because all the sages, all of the doctors and lawyers lived among the poor, and they were good role models. So, we are suggesting very strongly that those who work with fathers must be where the fathers are living in order to provide their services.

No. 4, we need to be available 24–7. We found out that most agencies close between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. The majority of people's problems take place after 5 and on weekends, so we need to have a program in the community that is available 24–7 by pager.

No. 5, the protege must be the locus of control. Now, what I mean by that is that most agencies will create a plan for a father or a mother and say "You must follow this if you are going to see your child." We believe that when a man comes up with his own plan, he will include jobs; he will include education; he will include time with the child. So, when he does that, we just need to provide the kind of support to him that is so desperately needed.

And the other thing that I want to point out is that we must find fathers by going door to door. Our program actually reaches out into the community. We walk the street where people live, and we go into those homes, and we lease and own homes in those communities. Now, why is that so important? Because the people believe that coming to conventional offices is very intimidating. By going to them on their turf, you create a rapport and a sense of relaxation.

Now, we specialize in five areas. No. 1, enhanced intra-personal development, assisting a father in creating a sense of self-worth and balance in order for him to get off drugs and alcohol. No. 2, enhanced family development, assisting a father and supporting him in establishing a loving and secure relationship with his family through marriage, paternity acknowledgement, pre-and post-marital counseling as well as child growth and development. No. 3, enhanced community development. Many times non-custodial fathers are involved in gang membership, resulting in homicide and break-ins. So, we work with fathers to create a relationship with his neighbor, so they can work together. No. 4, enhanced educational

development. It was said earlier that many of the fathers don't have educations. We work with them to secure a GED on literacy. Twelve percent go onto college. No. 5, enhanced entrepreneurship skill development; helping a father not only to get a job but to treat the job like it is a business so that he will be promoted throughout that company.

Last year, we received a Welfare-to-Work grant to go into six cities, "Reconnecting Fathers to their Families and to the Workplace." Now, I will just share with you some of the results of that program thus far. Since July 1998, we have placed 222 hard-to-place individuals, because we live in that community, and we have that trust—143 males and 79 females—and we have, right now, 190 still retaining a job; over a 72 percent success rate of retention. Now, we want to advance our program into other States and to other cities, and we have chosen several cities to do that: Virginia, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Colorado, Maryland, California, and Louisiana. I believe that as we help fathers become more loving, more understanding, and more compassionate, we can see a safer community, not only for our children but for the community as a whole. Thank you.

[The prepared statement follows:]

**Statement of Charles Augustus Ballard, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization**

Thank you Chairman Johnson. I am very pleased that this Committee is convening this hearing today on the issue of fatherlessness and responsible fatherhood solutions, which indicates that the Nation has begun to realize this is the vital next step in our welfare reform campaign.

Fatherlessness in a child's life unlike being fatherless (largely because of the father's death) is a condition created when there is no father in or out of the home who is willing to project a positive, risk-free lifestyle model through nurturing, compassion, love, affection and security. Children brought up under such wise and loving guidance will have no desire to wander around in search of pleasure and companionship. Gangs will not be attractive to them. Their characters are molded in the home and they form habits and principles that will provide them with a strong defense against drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, violence and school failure. They will go forth from the home to bless the world.

In all that we do, the end product must be children who feel that parents are directing them with tenderness, care and compassion. It is the work I've been involved in for the past 22 years. I began this work because I saw the many problems faced by the family. These problems were brought on by both in-home and out-of-home fathers. At that time it became very clear that in order to create enhanced opportunity for the child and mother, comprehensive outreach and home-based services must be provided to the father.

It has been projected that over 200,000 African-Americans will lose their lives prematurely. Of this group, a vast majority will be African-American males, mostly fathers. The cause of these premature deaths are: heart disease (over 40,000), cancer (33,000), HIV (11,000), Injuries (9,000), Homicides (8,200), Stroke (8,100), Pneumonia/Influenza (4,300), Diabetes (4,300), Lung Disease (4,100), and Perinatal conditions (2,700).

I am very concerned about the premature deaths, but we have even a greater problem: high rates of morbidity. The higher the morbidity in a community, the greater the mortality. Children who are exposed to the high risk life style of the father are predisposed to higher rates of deaths.

By the year 2000, more than 2 million American will be incarcerated. It has been estimated that although African-American males are less than 8% of this country, over 50% of this group will be African-American males.

This condition creates situations in the home which causes children to be placed in foster homes and juvenile detention centers. The combined number for this group is nearly 1 million! African-American children and youth make up more than 50% of this group as well. This, along with youth involvement in gangs, drug abuse,

school failure, including suspension and expulsion only aggravate an already bad situation.

It seems that most urban communities seem predisposed to experiencing early death, inordinate levels of foster care, family breakdown, and high levels of incarceration, all of which has an appalling impact on the responsibilities of parents and fathers. Helping fathers to become loving, nurturing, and compassionate parents and assisting them in providing safe havens for their families will go a long way in alleviating the problem of "fatherlessness."

The Fathers Counts Bill and the attention given to this issue by Congress and the Administration will not only aid groups like ours in helping fathers to be responsible from a nurturing and economic standpoint, but it will also promote self-sufficiency, good health and a reduction in crime by allowing us to empower fathers to be there for their children and wives—5, 10, 15 years and beyond.

When I founded the Institute over 16 years ago in Cleveland, OH, I knew that "turning the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers" would provide the foundational basis to restore safe and secure family environments. Independent evaluations of our work by Case Western Reserve and the University of Tennessee have attested to our results, and reinforced the vital importance of re-establishing role models of loving and compassionate marriages in our inner cities.

Key elements of our program are:

1. Targeting 16,000 mostly female head of households.
2. Re-seeding the targeted community with loving and secure, married couples who model a risk-free lifestyle.
3. All managing partners and support staff must live in the target community.
4. All staff must be available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week to provide services.
5. All staff must be willing to go directly into the people's home 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 5-cylinder" model of intervention:

1. Enhanced Intra-personal Development: This cylinder leads the father to a sense of self awareness, self control, self worth and a desire to be well and in good health.
2. Enhanced Family Development: This leads the whole family to create a therapeutic environment in order to support all family members in a positive manner.
3. Enhanced Community Development: Fathers will take responsibility for their own behavior and work to assist their neighbors in doing the same.
4. Enhanced Educational Development: Fathers learn the importance of education for himself and his 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!
5. 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%.

In 1998, the Institute was awarded a \$4.4 million grant in Round I Welfare-to-Work (WtW) for a six-city pilot initiative, *Reconnecting Fathers to their Families and to the Workplace*. Cited by the Labor Department's own Office of Performance Audits, the Institute has implemented a cutting edge demonstration with the following 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;
- A responsible fatherhood technology 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.
- State of the art management Information System (MIS) which calculates 70%–30% eligibility;
- Extensive Field Monitoring Manuals, financial control systems, and accountability mechanisms.

The Institute's innovative program is founded on the principle that connecting a non-custodial father to his children with an emotional bond creates within the father, not only the need, but also the desire to work to support his family. The foundation for delivery of services is based on the idea that the father's life has tremen-

dous impact on the lives of both his child(ren) and their mother(s). When comprehensive non-traditional services are provided to the father, life opportunities for the children and mother are enhanced. The major focus is on fathers, yet services are provided in a holistic approach to members of the family who impact the father's life—including the mother of his children who is receiving TANF.

We realize that the father, the mother, and the child is one complete unit and not a division of pieces. Any approach to create healing and move a family from TANF rolls must be comprehensive, inclusive, and address the father's fundamental issues which lie at the core of employment barriers. To overcome these barriers, the Institute believes that the individual must be strengthened in seven different areas to develop strong work habits: (1) Spirituality—a sense of right and wrong, self love, and self discipline; (2) Identity; (3) Belief system; (4) Purpose; (5) Ability to perform; (6) Behavior, and (7) Environment.

The target group we serve, primarily hard to place males, are characterized by multiple barriers to employment including teen parenting, illiteracy, school drop out, limited or nonexistent work experience, substance abuse, criminal records, dysfunctional relationships within their own families and with the mother(s) of his children, and low self worth.

The Institute's WTW program provides proteges (or clients) with Job Readiness and Placement, Post-Employment Training, Employment Activities and Support, and Job Retention Services. To enhance the effectiveness and success of these activities, proteges participate in Inductive Outreach Modules which assist them to visualize the possibilities of what can be and actively pursue the opportunities that allows those visions to manifest into reality.

The Inductive Outreach Modules are designed to assist proteges in resolving core issues which contribute to the barriers which have impeded their active and constructive participation in their families and society. Inductive Outreach Modules are self paced sessions covering fathering attitudes and feelings about one's self, his child(ren)'s mother, his child(ren), the educational system, the welfare system, and the justice system. Resolving these issues creates an environment for the protege to experience self awareness and individual responsibility. This foundation sets the framework to assist proteges to acquire skills, behaviors, motivation, and knowledge to maximize job placement, job retention, and increased earnings potential.

Because of our success in not only reaching fathers, but moving them successfully through our program and supporting them in becoming responsible fathers, we have received hundreds of phone calls and letters from across America to expand our services.

We at the Institute would like to begin the process of reaching other cities in order to help children across America smile because their fathers have involved themselves in their lives. Ask a child, what do you want most from your father? He will tell you, "I want him to love me and be kind to my mother." It is this kind of father that the Institute works to develop. It is these kinds of fathers who will make our homes and communities safe again.

I would like to commend this committee for its examination of ways to provide adequate funding as in the Fathers Counts Bill to help community-based programs like ours to expand our work into the many high-risk communities that have sought our services.

This issue is not only an economic one; we must be concerned with the child's health and safety, teaching men to become good nurturers who are very compassionate and responsible. Responsibility cannot just stop with child support, but must encompass the father's care for the family and child.

At the Institute, we believe the best gift a father can give to a child, is to love, honor and respect the child's mother, as he models a healthy, risk-free life style and supports his family with love and compassion. Thank you for your leadership in bringing this vital issue to the attention of Congress.

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Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much, Mr. Ballard. I will remind you as I should have said for the earlier panel that your entire statements will be entered in the record. We do have the 5-minute signals, because there is a lot of people to get through, and it allows for more discussion thereafter.

Mr. Johnson, president and chief executive officer of the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership. Nice to have you.

**STATEMENT OF JEFFERY M. JOHNSON, PH.D., PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, NATIONAL CENTER FOR STRATEGIC NONPROFIT PLANNING AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

Mr. JEFFERY JOHNSON. Good afternoon, Madam Chair and Members of the Human Resources Committee of the House and Ways Means Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you on the topic of responsible fatherhood. I am the president and chief executive officer of the National Center Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership, and we are dedicated to strengthening organizations to help them serve people and communities for the future.

Madam Chair, I am going to move on and just say that I know that I have a 5-minute time limit and I did grow up as the son of a baptist preacher. [Laughter.]

And for those of us who don't know what that means, it is that it is very difficult for me to get in front of mikes and the like for 5 minutes, but what I will do is try to stay focused on my remarks, but I do generally appreciate this opportunity.

As I entered this work with NPCL, I entered with 20 years of experience in working with fathers and families on a variety of issues. I also entered this work having a personal connection with it. For 12 wonderful years, I had two loving parents who supported me. My father died when I was 12 years of age, and I learned much from him in terms of how to go to work every day; how to respect my mother; how to go to church, and how to try to do my best in school. And, when my father died, leaving my mother with 10 children, it was a tremendous challenge, and I think that my ability to overcome the challenges that were faced in my family really has contributed mightily to the insight that I bring to NPCL and the commitment that my organization has to this whole fatherhood area.

What I would like to do is focus on four things as part of my oral testimony, and then I am just going to refer you appropriately to my formal written testimony for other information. First, I want to tell you about NPCL and what we do. The mission at NPCL is to enhance the capacity of community-based organizations to address and identify local needs primarily through family and neighborhood empowerment. One critical element of family empowerment particularly in the inner cities is the return of fathers to families, whether in traditional or non-traditional ways. Our current focus is building the capacity of community-based organizations to serve fathers in a way that will enable them to carry out their critical roles as nurturers and economic providers. At NPCL, Y2K means "Yes to Knowledge," and we have the knowledge and expertise required to effectively work with low-income, hard-to-serve fathers and the community-based organizations who serve them.

The ultimate goal of NPCL is to help families and neighborhoods become safe havens for children. Over the past 3 years, NPCL has successfully provided services to over 3,000 agencies across the

country through our customized workshops, through our customized training, and through our conferences on fatherhood.

One of the primary initiatives of NPCL is our Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration that was referred to by the Under Secretary and was also alluded to by two of our previous speakers. It is a comprehensive national initiative operating in 10 test cities designed to help poor, single fathers pull themselves out of poverty and build stronger links with their children and their children's mother.

This demonstration, which is administered by NPCL, is a pioneering effort which is supported by the Ford Foundation, the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, and also the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. This partnership includes private social agencies, including grassroots community-based organizations, and child support enforcement, all committed to helping young fathers take the legal and emotional responsibility for their children.

In each of our 10 demonstration sites, an impressive private and public coalition of experts and frontline providers, including the National Head Start Association and a number of Welfare-to-Work grantees, work together to supply an array of services to these young fathers. In total, more than 100 agencies across the 10 sites have agreed to be partners in this demonstration.

The operative idea here is the formation of partnerships that leverages resources in a broad coalition working toward a shared goal of strong, independent families where children are well cared for by both mothers and fathers. Our guiding principle is that fathers have value to children even if fathers do not have money.

What I would like to do now is just talk about the fathers we serve. The fathers that we serve, we refer to them as dead-broke dads, and make no mistake, they are very poor and have very little money. Unlike deadbeat fathers, dead-broke fathers qualify for food stamps very much like the mothers on welfare. Dead-broke fathers often have their first child before finishing high school or acquiring work experience; they are all practical aspects, unemployable. Dead-broke dads are not just an inner-city phenomena; 45 percent are white; 37 percent are black and whether low-income, rural or urban, they often come from families that have suffered generations of poverty.

The real connection that we make with these young fathers is that we meet them where they are. The average father enters this program; comes in with a strong father hunger. Typically, he has grown up without his father; he has resulting feelings of anger and resentment. He also feels stereotyped by society and believes that the playing field isn't level for him as a worker or as a father. He is typically angry, alienated, and possibly depressed. He is a tough, tough client. However, there are two critical components of our demonstration that help to reach these men's hearts and guide them to responsible fatherhood. Madam Chair, one is one-on-one case management. The second is peer support groups.

One of the things that we found from the Parents Fair Share program, which has really been the predecessor of our program, is that one of the most successful elements of it was the peer support groups. I might add here that I, along with Pam Wilson, who is our senior consultant on peer support, actually authored that initial

peer support curriculum that we used in the unwed fathers pilot project with PPV, and also with the Parents Fair Share program. We are very proud of the impact of that curriculum.

Finally, I would just say, Madam Chair, that there has been a lot of discussion about marriage. I do have a position on marriage. I clearly support it. To me, the issue is not whether, but when. A lot of our fathers, when they enter the program, by the testimony of the mothers and by the testimony of themselves in the community, they are not marriageable. What the program tries to do is to provide support to the father and support to the mother to put them in a position so they can see marriage as a viable option.

I clearly think that the problem that we have with these programs is that we do not provide these young couples the exposure they need to make the right decisions about their relationship and the right relationship about their children.

But with that, I will end, and will be happy to entertain any questions from Committee members.

[The prepared statement follows:]

**Statement of Jeffery M. Johnson, Ph.D., President, and Chief Executive Officer, National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership**

Good afternoon. I want to thank Chairman Johnson and members of the Human Resources Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee for this opportunity to testify on your efforts to promote responsible fatherhood. I am Jeffery M. Johnson, president and CEO of the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership, or NPCL, a national nonprofit dedicated to strengthening organizations to help them serve people and communities for the future. NPCL is primarily supported by a public/private partnership involving the Ford Foundation, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

I commend you for your demonstrated wisdom, foresight and commitment to fathers, families and children on welfare, as evidenced by these hearings directed at this long-neglected aspect of family social policy in America. If you are successful in passing a Responsible Fatherhood bill, I would urge the committee to make sure that the law encompasses efforts to serve low-income, low-skilled dads. It would be a first step toward building effective and needed post-welfare-reform policy aimed at helping low-income fathers—the consistently overlooked factor in the welfare family equation—to become self-sufficient and accountable to their families and children. Such a bill would have wide-ranging implications for greater child support collections and the success of welfare-to-work initiatives. It should also continue to encourage public and private partnerships and provide for the participation of faith-based entities.

My testimony is based on the work I have done over the past 20 years concerning fathers and families, as well as on my personal experience. For 12 years I had the wonderful experience of being reared in a family with two loving parents. 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. She struggled to make ends meet and struggled to find time for all of my brothers and sisters, who each faced their own unique challenges. It was incredibly difficult for a single parent.

Personally, I experienced what some researchers call “father hunger.” I yearned for my dad and I have often thought about and been grateful for the lessons he taught me regarding work, responsibility and parenting. I know firsthand the importance of fathers in families and I try to bring that knowledge to my work at NPCL.

The mission of NPCL is to enhance the capacity of community-based organizations to address identified local needs, primarily through family and neighborhood empowerment. One critical element of family empowerment, particularly in the inner cities, is the return of fathers to their families, whether in traditional or non-traditional ways. Our current focus is building the capacity of community-based organizations to provide services to fathers that will enable them to carry out their critical roles as nurturers and economic providers. At NPCL, Y2K means “Yes to

Knowledge!” and we have the knowledge and the expertise required to work effectively with low-income, hard-to-serve fathers and the community-based organizations that serve them.

When both mothers and fathers are responsible parents working at legitimate jobs paying a family-sustaining wage, they are less likely to be dependent on welfare or criminal endeavor to support themselves and their families which is in turn beneficial to communities. The ultimate goal of NPCL is to help families and neighborhoods become safe havens for children.

Our particular strengths lie in our ability to provide hands-on technical assistance to community-based groups and to grow organizations where gaps exist. The aim is a synergy in which independent organizations encourage similar independence in the individuals and families who live and work in the community. And, as we know, strong families are critical for the health, economic and developmental well-being of children. Over the past three years, NPCL has successfully provided services to over 3,000 agencies across the country.

One of NPCL’s primary initiatives is the Partners for Fragile Families (PFF) demonstration project, a comprehensive national initiative operating in 10 test cities, designed to help poor, single fathers pull themselves out of poverty and build stronger links to their children and their children’s mothers. This demonstration, which is administered by NPCL—with support from the Ford and Charles Stewart Mott Foundations, the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Labor—is a pioneering partnership between public and private social service agencies, including grassroots community-based organizations and child support enforcement agencies all committed to helping young fathers take legal, and emotional responsibility for their children.

In each of our ten PFF demonstration sites, an impressive public/private coalition of experts and front-line providers, including the National Head Start Association and a number of Welfare-to-Work grantees, work together to supply an array of services that include one-on-one case management, peer support and parent education groups, help with getting GED and/or post secondary education, anger management, employment and training and other services. The federal government cannot and should not be expected to solve the problems of low-income families alone. Nor should private and community-based groups be expected to address these issues without government. The operative idea here is a partnership that leverages resources in a broad based coalition working 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.

And make no mistake about it, the population we refer to as “dead-broke dads” has very little money. Unlike “deadbeat dads,” the fathers we serve likely qualify for food stamps themselves and statistically look very much like welfare mothers. The difference between “deadbeat dads” and those we refer to as “dead-broke dads” is that the former can pay child support but will not. “Dead-broke dads” cannot pay child support but would if they were able.

Deadbeat dads are often one-half of a mature divorced or separated couple. The relationship began, they married, then the relationship ended when one spouse decided it was over. Public policy in these instances requires—and rightly so—that the noncustodial parent, usually the father, provide adequately for the children. This will ensure that the mother and the children avoid poverty, frequently the result when the father withdraws his, commonly higher, income. Public policy may also require some sort of mediation process so that conflict between the parents does not visit itself upon the child(ren). With this kind of systemic support, the mother can get back on her feet, find her way back into the labor market, perhaps remarry and reestablish a middle-class lifestyle. Public policy thus helps families bring their union to an amicable end and recover.

This is not the situation among “fragile families”—that is, families consisting of two low-skilled biological parents and their child(ren). 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 full implications of unmarried, unprotected sex and childbearing. “Dead-broke dads” often have their first child before finishing high school or acquiring work experience. They are in all practical respects unemployable.

Dead-broke dads are not just an inner-city phenomenon. Forty-five percent are white, 37 percent are black, and whether low-income rural or urban, they often come from families that have suffered generations of poverty. Theirs are the characteristics of long-term welfare recipients with limited prospects for exiting welfare dependency. These same deficiencies make the fathers of fragile families poor can-



didates for work or marriage. Like welfare mothers, these men require some systemic intervention and support in order to become self-sufficient and able to function as productive citizens and responsible parents.

One of the most significant obstacles these men face is the child support enforcement system, which, however unintentionally, thwarts efforts of these fathers to provide for their children and repair relationships with their children's mothers. The system is designed to extract payments from "deadbeat dads" and to punish in myriad ways those who do not pay. However, the system makes no distinction between inability to pay and refusal to do so. It makes sense to punish a man who can pay by sending him to jail for his failure to meet his obligations. It makes little sense to send a man without a job, or any prospects of a job to jail for his inability to find a job he has never been qualified to hold. Jail in this situation only exacerbates the negative. Now the "dead-broke dad" is further estranged from his children, unemployable—and he has a record.

It is imperative that any proffered proposals—including any new iteration of a Responsible Fatherhood bill, any revisions to the child support funding structure, or changes during the reauthorization of the welfare-to-work act—not pose additional barriers to fathers and "fragile family" interaction.

In this post-welfare reform era, we have indeed changed public assistance from a program that tolerated stagnation and long-term dependency to a system designed to provide temporary assistance. Now, however, the real work begins. Success must be redefined. We must succeed at lifting families and children out of poverty. We cannot hope to achieve those aims if fathers are not part of the equation. Since there is little help for low-income dads, that is where we should next turn our attention. Just as we have shifted our focus to assist poor mothers in their quest for self-sufficiency, we must make an investment in fathers so that they too may assume legal, financial, emotional and responsibility for the families they have helped to create. Again we must redefine success. We should not gauge our accomplishment solely on the basis of how much child support we collect. We must also pay attention to how many fathers and mothers successfully move beyond poverty and are able to provide a stable and nurturing home environment for their children.

NPCL's Partners for Fragile Families (PFF) demonstration is uniquely qualified and currently positioned to help make that goal a reality. As you know, PRWORA took some giant steps in this direction, but it did not go all the way. While PRWORA calls for child support to make appropriate referrals to employment for unemployed noncustodial parents, it does not allow child support to fund any recommended employment and training activities.

The average young father who enters one of our programs comes with strong father hunger. Typically, he has grown up without his father and he has resulting feelings of anger and resentment. He also feels stereotyped by society and believes that the playing field isn't level for him as a worker or as a father. He is typically angry, alienated and possibly depressed. He is a tough, tough client. However, there are two critical components of our demonstration that help to reach these men's hearts and guide them to responsible fatherhood.

The first is one-on-one case management: This proactive component pairs each father with a skilled counselor who serves both as a role model and a guide. The case manager, usually a man, depicts responsible manhood. He believes in this father's potential and provides a format for him to set goals and work toward those goals. If a young man has never seen what it looks like or experienced what it feels like to be a good father, how could he be expected to do it himself?

The second critical component is peer support groups. These groups bring fathers together with other young men like themselves. The groups serve two basic purposes. They provide a forum for the men to be supported and affirmed but also to be challenged and confronted. In the groups the men define for themselves what it means to be a man and a father and then challenge each other to live up to those standards. They also brainstorm methods to overcome obstacles, stay the course and resolve problems in the world of work and in their often troubled relationships with their children's mother. The groups also provide structured activities from NPCL's Fatherhood Development Curriculum that help the fathers learn or reinforce important knowledge and skills in areas such as child development, communication, anger management, conflict resolution, understanding the child support system, working as a team with their child's mother and her family, considering marriage and what it takes to be "marriageable," and family planning—deciding how and if additional children fit into their lives and finances and taking steps to prevent additional pregnancies until they are ready.

The peer support group process is often very powerful for these fathers. Guided by a skilled and caring facilitator, they experience male camaraderie that says men can be strong, yet caring, that being there for their kids is the right thing to do

and they can do it. The positive feelings and competencies that men get from the groups increase their motivation to find work, provide for their children, negotiate with the mom, and be there for their kids. NPCL staff has learned to trust the process. Anecdotal reports suggest that young fathers are indeed becoming responsible workers and parents, adept at mediating the relationship between themselves and the mothers of their children.

A unique aspect of our demonstration is the emphasis on 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 parents are married, children need food, clothes, care, love and two supportive, nurturing parents. Once a young father becomes self-supporting and an integral part of his child(ren)'s lives and repairs, or more fully develops, the relationship with the mother of his child(ren), marriage becomes a more realistic option, especially if that is something the couple seeks for themselves.

The Partners for Fragile Families demonstration represents the start of the fourth generation of fatherhood programs. The Parents Fair Share demonstration, which you have already heard about, was the third generation of fatherhood programs in this country. Here, 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. As a result of these endeavors, 1,000 low-income, low-skilled young dads that fit our profile will be targeted each year. For the three (3) years of the demonstration, they will receive the capacity building and skill training they need to more fully discharge their role as dad. That means that 3,000 fathers will be returned to their families by the PFF Site Demonstrations.

NPCL is uniquely qualified to provide ongoing technical assistance and training for all of the members of the PFF collaboration, as well as other groups interested in employing this approach. We have trained more practitioners to work with non-custodial parents on responsible fatherhood than any other organization in America. Our sites will enjoy the most comprehensive capacity building delivery strategy ever seen in the fatherhood field.

Experienced community-based organizations that have won the trust of hard-to-reach men will help those young fathers to establish legal paternity, learn their legal rights and responsibilities and negotiate the formal child support system. Child support enforcement agencies in turn will work with fathers to modify child support orders, give fathers time to secure training and a job, and then gradually increase the order consistent with the man's ability to pay. In addition, the demonstration includes workforce development. 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 will have the knowledge, experience and desire to work with low-skilled fathers, as well as links to jobs made available by the private sector.

PFF is also committed to implementing a wage progression model in order to provide for career-building jobs that offer the opportunity for an increase in wages. Preliminary research data from Access Support and Advancement Partnership (ASAP) show that young men who match the profile of young fathers in the PFF project are succeeding in training and job placement. Of 567 of participants enrolled in the Boston and New York (ASAP) intensive job training programs in 1997 and 1998, for example, a total of 308 were placed in jobs after two years of training and on-the-job experience. The average salary of ASAP graduates in Boston was \$22,308 and \$20,301 in New York. By comparison, in 1990, 61 percent of dead-broke dads had incomes below poverty level (about \$6,800) and 86 percent had personal incomes below the poverty level for a family of four (about \$13,000). Thus, the Partners for Fragile Families demonstration has an excellent prognosis. The Welfare-to-Work amendments introduced by Congressman Cardin's bill would support more programs such as this.

Much of the welfare reform debate missed such critical considerations. We have before us an opportunity to correct past oversights. As of August 1996 sweeping changes revised the way welfare programs were operated. States toughened their cooperation requirements, capped the number of children who could receive assistance and custom-designed state eligibility criteria. Lawmakers passed provisions to keep mom in school while she received assistance. Much of the literature spoke of "families" on welfare, meaning a mother and child(ren). We had become very com-

fortable in defining family with no reference to the father. That omission proved prescient because those policies in no way took into account his real circumstances. Several assumptions were at play during the welfare overhaul, including the belief that all fathers—including those with children on welfare—had the ability to pay any child support order fixed by an administrative or judicial tribunal. Projections that assumed an annual increase in earnings consistent with the rate of inflation or the consumer price index were used in setting goals for welfare reform. But if your basic earnings are zero, or you rarely have a job all year long, none of that applies to you. Policymakers trusted that we could significantly progress toward our goal of “ending welfare as we knew it” by having moms identify dad, establish paternity, collect the money and transfer the dollars to the household where the child was being reared. That is not the case for a significant portion of our population, which means that those policies missed dead-broke dads and fragile families by a wide margin.

It is imperative that any new or revised policy initiatives not repeat the shortcomings of recent-past policy by ignoring their potential impact on low-income fathers. Indeed I am here today to encourage the members of this committee to work toward supporting the efforts to assist fragile families by reviewing every family social policy change with its impact on fragile families in the back of your mind.

When this committee reviews a proposed Responsible Fatherhood bill, or amendments to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), and welfare-to-work reauthorization, Social Service Block Grants, or child support and its funding, I ask that you remember our fragile families. Although we have studied these issues, I certainly do not claim to be an expert in all of these areas. Candidly, I have only one overriding mission here today and that is to ensure an environment in which states and localities, public and private partners, institutions and community-based organizations are more likely to initiate and continue to support responsible fatherhood programs. Unless we return fathers to their role as nurturers and supporters of their children, not only will welfare reform fail, we will also fail a new generation of children, our future.

When this committee considers a Responsible Fatherhood bill not only should the bill serve low-income, low-skilled dads it should also provide for peer support activities, parenting education, parenting skills development, conflict and anger management, and a variety of other developmental activities designed to equip young fathers to take a positive role in the lives of their children.

To promote employment the bill should provide a combination of short-term job acquisition, interim job training, and long-term career development. Heretofore only accessible under the Job Training and Partnership Act (JPTA), a Responsible Fatherhood bill should expand the availability of multiple, flexible strategies necessary to address the challenges these men and their families face. Provisions for flexible activities, funding through the workforce development system and partnerships at the community level are all encompassed in the Welfare-to-Work amendments introduced by Congressman Cardin.

A great part of that response, we believe, is Partners for Fragile Families.

When this committee considers the reauthorization of welfare to work, I ask that you look for simplified eligibility criteria for poor men and that criteria do not negatively impact the circumstances of the mother and child(ren). We must work to make implementation of this program as simple as possible for local service providers. Additionally, we believe it makes sense to require a personal responsibility contract between the program and the fathers and it is important to maintain funding for programs that serve moms while we allocate new money to dads so that both can support their children.

Again, we believe Congressman Cardin’s bill goes a long way to address these issues. Should this committee look at new proposals for funding of the child support system I urge you to keep a few things in mind. First, there is almost universal agreement that the child support funding system is too complicated. However, there is little consensus as to what changes in the funding system, other than the soon-to-be implemented performance incentive plan, would support obtaining the evolving mission of child support currently under discussion. I am told that any of the approaches currently being discussed would, in all probability, cause major disruptions in our larger states. If that is the case, this committee should be mindful that 50 percent of this nation’s child support caseload is accounted for by the eight largest states. California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas could all be hurt by any dramatic change in the current funding formula. Families within these states as well as inter-state cases would be negatively impacted. Disruption of those programs would surely result in reductions in child support collections and would reduce the likelihood that states would undertake additional fatherhood activities. Any new proposal should ensure adequate funding for

the child support program, simplify funding and distribution, and reward states for continual improvement in their program. We realize that cost neutrality would be a consideration for the federal government.

There is good news. Since the implementation of welfare reform, states have an immense amount of flexibility to implement various "state options." States are free, within the broadest limits ever provided, to set their own eligibility criteria for welfare programs. The major provision of the welfare reform legislation, TANF, only had four purposes. Those are:

- To decrease welfare dependency by providing enhanced job opportunities;
- To provide cash assistance and other services to needy families;
- To reduce the rate of out-of-wedlock pregnancies;
- To encourage the formation of two-parent households.

Within those boundaries, states have great flexibility in providing services. The Welfare-to-Work program provides the opportunity to serve a more targeted population including fathers. Any changes to simplify the eligibility criteria for welfare-to-work should clarify for states and their program operators how to access these funds to serve low-skilled, low-income dads.

Again, I applaud your foresight and commitment to fathers, families and children. Your attention to this issue and the potential for legislation that would support fatherhood programs nationally is both exciting and gratifying. If you are successful in developing and passing a Responsible Fatherhood bill we, together, will be able to work to "turn the hearts of the parents to the children; and the hearts of the children to their parents . . . to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Malachi 4:6; Luke 1:17)

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this afternoon.

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Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much. It is my pleasure to welcome my friend, George Gay, Reverend Gay, here today. He has developed a program, Color Me Father, that has the purpose to help never-married fathers assume legal, financial, and emotional responsibility for their children, just what we have been talking about, but he has been out there on the front line many years when there was no money at all, and now when there's teeny tiny bits of money.

Thank you, George, for being with us.

**STATEMENT OF GEORGE L. GAY, PASTOR, UFW BAPTIST  
CHURCH, NEW BRITAIN, CONNECTICUT**

Reverend GAY. Well, I'm glad first of all, to be able to be here. I will preface my comments by saying that I am a Baptist minister.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. That's why we have the lights, George. [Laughter.]

Reverend GAY. However, I will try to be very disciplined. I will also try not to be repetitive in my comments.

I would like to start by saying to Dr. Johnson that I have met Pamela Wilson, and the curriculum that I use in my program, I was trained by Pamela Wilson in Boston, MA to run it, and it is an excellent curriculum, and it works.

I would like to begin by saying that I am very happy to be here to represent the church in this matter. I have heard quite a bit about marriage. I believe that we entertain those thoughts early on through our spiritual training. I also believe for a fact that there is a church just about on every corner in every major city in this Nation. I think that it is about time that the churches be allowed not to look at the separation between church and State, but be allowed to join hands to help to work and create a better community. I believe that when true people get in trouble, they lean toward

their spiritual side. So when a young lady is pregnant and doesn't want to tell her parents, she comes to the church. I believe that there should be some type of assistance there. The same thing with a young man. There will be assistance of some kind at that church for them.

I am a strong believer that moneys that have been funneled from the Federal Government have been trapped in bureaucratic red tape and have not been allowed to get to the people actually providing the services. That is another reason that I am hoping that this time, we will be able to bypass those issues. We are here. We're not going anywhere. I heard someone allude to 24-7 in their comments, which means 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the church is on call.

Now we rely for the most part on donations. However, we know that this is work that definitely needs more support than a church donation is able to provide. In the program, for instance, that I run, we give a stipend to the participants. That stipend, we ask that they use—those that do not have work, do not have any means of support, can have a way to buy Pampers or milk or something for that child for the session that they attend, which is a good incentive piece. However, the church will not continue to be able to afford to give them that. They have ideas in my program of furthering what they are able to do by giving bonds from a church, bonds from a bank rather, in hopes of when that child is growing up, that child will already have a bank account started.

My guys actually want to get into it so far, that they want to do a training session where they are able to provide medical attention for the children in an emergency. They want to be certified for first aid. They want to go through that training and then have a piece of paper that says I can do this, and I can train somebody perhaps how to save a life, or if I am alone with my child, I can save my child's life.

The other thing I think that's important is that we not forget again that if we are going to build good strong moral character, we cannot leave the spiritual part of ourselves out. Even Dr. Sigmund Freud in his confusion, I would say, alluded to the fact that we must remember that in order for us to be complete, we must recognize that there is a higher power than ourselves. I believe that reaching for that higher power within ourselves enables us to continue to grow. A good church always encourages anybody to continue to reach up a ladder of growth. There is always another rung that you can go to, so when we start talking about a baseline job or a minimum wage paying job, it's a start. We must start somewhere and we must be able to follow up from that with good viable technique.

Again, I allude to the program that was developed by Dr. Johnson and Pamela Wilson as a tool for education. Again, sticking with the church, many times we go out and we do according to what we have learned in our spiritual background. However, we forget sometimes, just like anybody else, we go and we baptize, but many times we forget to teach. Those lessons that become so valuable that we must go back and reevaluate how many we missed in our teaching sessions. Hopefully we will be able to fill in those gaps.

Again, when the programs close, when the traditional 8 to 5 or 9 to 5 programs close, the church's doors are always open. There is a communication line, whether it is paid for or not paid for. If we want to make a difference with the dads, and not just punish them for not being able to pay their bills, if we really want good moral fathers, then we are going to have to go back and train and teach those fathers what they have missed. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Mr. Raesz, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT E. RAESZ, JR., AUSTIN, TEXAS**

Mr. RAESZ. Madam Chair, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear here today. I want to take this opportunity to urge you in the course of looking at the various proposals and offers that are being submitted to you, that you take a look at some of the existing law and possibly look at some modifications to avoid laws that may hinder you in your efforts to move forward with your goals.

The Bradley amendment has been in effect, I believe, since 1986. The effect of the Bradley amendment is to limit the court's ability to retroactively modify the existing support orders that the individuals that we're talking about here today are sometimes faced with.

I served 9 years as a family law judge and currently limit my practice to the area of family law. I also spend a lot of time in some of the local clinics that provide free legal services to individuals of the Austin area. In the course of those services, I have come across thousands of individuals who I feel unjustly have suffered because of the Bradley amendment.

The amendment, when created, certainly had some good qualities. But what we have seen over the course of time is that not all cases can be strictly limited to the law as it's written. I have listed a number of examples of individuals that could benefit by some modification of the amendment, and rightfully so. I have clients who have had serious injuries. I had a client with a broken neck that was laid up for a number of years and couldn't work. Over the period of time that he was laid up, accumulated in excess of \$40,000 in arrearages. It is unfortunate as an attorney, and the judge that that individual had to go before, we had to explain to him there is nothing we can do. Because of the Bradley amendment, the court cannot look beyond the date of the filing of the motion and retroactively modify his support order to the date of his injury.

There's another example that we have listed is an individual who came down with a serious illness. For similar reasons was unable to make it to court, unable to hire a lawyer, and go in and have this matter addressed before it got out of hand. Working in the free clinics, we see individuals on a regular basis. The individuals that you are trying to promote participate more in their families, are individuals that are going to court, in trying to deal with large amounts of arrearages that resulted at times from them not having proper notice of the court hearing at which time the support order was set or have experienced lengthy periods of unemployment based on no actions of their own.

What I would like to encourage you to do is look at placing the discretion back in the courts to work with these individuals, and where there's just reason to retroactively modify these orders, give these individuals some relief. Right now, we are seeing these people out working two and three jobs, trying to pay arrearages that were based on unrealistic amounts of income that they weren't making, but yet the courts have entered these orders and they are now faced with paying those sums. They are spending their time working those multiple jobs rather than spending the time with their families.

I have a lot of faith in the judiciary. I spent a lot of time there. I have served on a number of judicial committees, and especially I can tell you in the State of Texas, the judges there are looking out for the children. They are looking out for the families as a whole. I think you can expect those individuals to represent the State and families, and do what's just, without jeopardizing the support that we expect our children to receive.

We are not looking to help the dead beats. I used to put them in jail. But there are plenty of these individuals that are dead broke that need some assistance. They need some relief. They need some retroactive relief in the way of the arrearages that they are faced with. Thank you.

[The prepared statement follows:]

**Statement of Robert E. Raesz, Jr., Austin, Texas**

Madam Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today regarding fatherhood. I have reviewed a number of the studies being made available to your committee on the consequences of father absence in a child's life. As a retired family and juvenile court judge and practicing family law attorney, I deal with these consequences on a daily basis. It is encouraging to see you taking the action necessary to break the cycle of school failures, unemployment, and non-marital child births and child rearing resulting from the absence of parents. I am hopeful that you will allow the judges of our Country the opportunity to assist you in your efforts. I have no doubt that our courts will fully utilize the programs you may implement if it means the involvement and support of both parents in the lives of our children. I am also hopeful that, in moving forward with your programs, you will leave the courts with a degree of discretion to utilize the programs created on an individual level, based on the facts that they find themselves with.

In the process of looking ahead, I would also ask that you take the time to look back at existing laws and determine how changes in such things as the Bradley Amendment might help you meet your goal of consistent father involvement. Our courts inability to make child support modifications retroactive beyond the date a modification motion is filed, a limitation imposed by the Bradley Amendment, has left a number of the individuals I represent, as well as many others I counsel and come in contact with, owing large sums of child support and interest that they do not have the ability to pay. I am not speaking of the "dead beat" parents that find themselves in that position because of their negligence or indifference. I am referring to individuals who, due to serious injuries or illness, unforeseen unemployment, or actual possession of their children and other legitimate reasons, are left without the funds to pay their support or hire an attorney to timely modify their support orders. Many of these individuals are forced to work more than one job in an effort to stay out of jail at the expense of their relationship with their children.

A prime example is a client I will call John Jones. John was involved in a serious accident which resulted in a fractured back. He endured months of rehabilitation before eventually being able to return to work. The accident and subsequent inability to hire an attorney left him \$40,000 plus in arrears. The courts inability to modify the support order retroactive to the date of John's injuries left him working two jobs in an attempt to simply stay out of jail. This also left John unable to spend time with his children.

This type of situation is not uncommon. My client Jim Jones, no relation to John, has been diagnosed with an eye condition that renders him unable drive to a job

he has held for several years. Several months passed before Jim was able to raise enough money to hire an attorney to file a modification action on his behalf. Jim's ex-wife, Jane, is now using his delinquency as a tool to effect a decrease in the amount of time he and his son are able to spend together.

I have counseled with hundreds of individuals with stories similar to John and Jim who can't afford to hire me or some other attorney. Their arrearages are increasing daily. They too are experiencing problems with access to their children for reasons beyond their control. I would suggest that a modification of the Bradley Amendment to allow our courts the discretion to make modification in these cases retroactive to dates of injuries, the onset of the long term illness, the beginning of unavoidable periods of unemployment and the like, would result in just and fair decisions and would promote contact between children and their fathers; contact that is necessary to achieve the goals being set by this Subcommittee.

Some may express concerns that our courts would abuse this discretion but I have faith in our judges as a whole and would expect our appellate courts to rectify the few unjustified decisions that may result, just as they do now.

I challenge you and offer my support in any possible way to implement the programs and changes necessary to assist our agencies and courts as they strive to keep parents involved and balance the monetary, emotional, and developmental needs of our children.

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Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you.

Next I would like to call on Lisa Nkonoki, who is the co-founder and executive director of the Tate George Dreamshot Foundation. It probably was the first voice I heard about what a big difference dads did make many years ago, the founder of the Dads Do Make a Difference campaign.

Nice to have you, Lisa.

**STATEMENT OF LISA A. NKONOKI, CO-FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TATE GEORGE DREAM SHOT FOUNDATION**

Ms. NKONOKI. Thank you so much for inviting me. I am very honored. As the rest of my colleagues here, I am also long-winded at times, but I will try and be very brief for this.

But unlike most of the people here, I sit in the position of being one of those unwed mothers, and also a young girl who was abandoned by my father. So please be patient with me as I try and tell you a little bit about my story, and how I found the Dads Do Make a Difference project.

First of all, I would like to say that we are here, the Dads Do Make a Difference project, to say it's a positive movement with a message. We are here to promote being a dad as a cool, hip, responsible thing to do. That is really what we want everybody to know, not just that it's an unwed, low-income issue. Everybody needs to think being a dad is cool, hip, responsible. If we all listened to Michael Jordon when he recently retired again, it wasn't about the money. It was about learning how to be a father, carpool, do all those things that a lot of us have had the opportunity to do.

So I want to say to you, as a single mom for 16 years and 48 weeks, I am honored to have this opportunity to stand here before you discussing the plight of fathers. I am, I feel, the biggest cheerleader for dads, as the mom regarded as one of the only moms in the country to start a positive program for fathers. Though my own father, a Tanzanian college professor, abandoned me at the age of one, I know first hand the impact that not having a father had on me, especially as an unwed teen mom myself. Fortunately, my ca-



reer path and self-motivation and family support led me to never have to apply for welfare, but it is for many of the people that I grew up with in our hometown of New Britain, CT, that I also speak on behalf of.

Though things were difficult at times, I was determined that my own children's—whom I have two children, 17 and 13, from two different fathers, as I speak to you here, one who paid lots of child support and another who didn't pay child support. Despite my best efforts to keep them involved, we were definitely estranged for quite some time. I started this project after my now 17-year-old son Jason, who was at the time about 13, began experiencing difficulties that all the money, privileged lifestyles, et cetera, could not change. When my children realized that one of my best friends, who is here today, former NBA player Tate George, despite his busy NBA schedule and other responsibilities, took time with them to do special activities, talk with them, and just pay attention to them, it became evident to my son, in particular, that his own father, who was at the time unemployed, not very busy, didn't take the time with him.

It became evident that resentment and bitterness was going to be the plight of my own child. I was angry. As a mom, I was very angry. One of the things that I did as a writer, I wrote the statement "Dads do make a difference. Real dads do. Children only have one lifetime, and you need to be a part of it." The reasoning for that was I wanted to see the reaction of my kids' dad. Needless to say, it was pretty bad.

At that time though, we were all reacting to negative behaviors. One of the things that I decided to acknowledge, despite the shortcomings that we could list about my kids' dads, had the kids ever heard anything positive that they could feel proud of that their father had done, or they could identify with? Starting from there, I knew to say something bad about dad meant that half of my children could feel that they, in fact, were also bad. I don't think any mom directly wants their children to feel bad for any intention. So for this reason, the campaign is about the positive, how we can positively empower dads and our kids, how we can communicate, be more inclusive, give information instead of always taking and demanding.

Take one of the dads I have worked with, Roger Van from New Britain, CT. Formerly incarcerated with his own sons, he spent more time in jail with his sons than he did out of jail. He was a married father. He did live in the household. But he was actually forced to sell drugs because of lack of employment. Having worked with Roger over the last 3 years, I know first hand what developing a rapport and just developing and increasing his self esteem and helping him to build a dream sheet for himself, meeting that father where he was at.

I want to also have you think about a couple more things. If you call dads to come to a training program or to find out how to see their kids, how many of them will come? If I go out as the Dads Do Make a Difference project and tell them that they can get free Reebok sneakers, Nike sneakers, NBA tickets, and a chance to do activities with their kids with no strings attached, how many do you think are coming to see me? Most of them are coming to see

me. The reason is, there's incentive. We all live by incentives, a lot of us do. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as in the end, we can also train and develop a rapport and get the bottom line, and that's them being with their kids.

What about moms like me, who never went on welfare, but having the oldest child of four different children, the State welfare takes the money from child support of my kid's dad. I don't get any of it because it goes directly to pay off the child support welfare bill. That's something that I think is just detrimental to mothers like myself. What about fathers with their credit reports that prohibit them from getting cars, houses, or anything else, because of the over-burdening of child support.

The other thing is my son who went to play for Little League as a young teenager, needed a birth certificate long form. His birth certificate stated that he had no father, despite the fact that his father had been paying child support since he was a baby. What about that? The embarrassment of our children when they actually come out and have to deal with either going to school, Little League, or college. Many of the obstacles are fear, lack of information. We simply cannot have this as business as usual. You cannot legislative positive involvement. We cannot continue to be reactive. We need to be more proactive. We can coach and empower dads through their self-esteem.

One thing we have to all remember, we all have a father. That is a common denominator that exists between all of us. So when you all talk about what needs to be done, we need to first get Government, court, and moms in many cases, including myself at one point, out of the way. A lot of dads cannot see their kids simply because the mom doesn't like who they are with, where they are going, or what time they are going to come around. That shouldn't be the case. Marriage does not ensure a compassionate and educated parent.

In closing, I would like to say it takes a team effort to win on behalf of kids, and acknowledge the part of my team that you have to be. Everybody has a role to play. What really needs to be clear is that people need to be trained in terms of what their actual role is, whether it's in the church, whether it's in business, education. How often do you hear of someone ask for a parent-teacher conference, and as long as the mom goes, it's OK. You don't actually ask is there a dad, or can I schedule a separate conference. So I just encourage you, I encourage all of us to be more inclusive of how we talk and deal with our fathers. Most importantly, we need to rally them on from where they are at.

As I wear this button, "Dads do make a difference," people stop me on the street every day and say things, sometimes negative, sometimes positive. But most importantly, they are saying something. I think what's happened is there has been no open, safe forum for people to be able to talk about their fathers, whether they are in our lives, out of our lives, active or inactive, deceased or alive. We need to acknowledge that first and foremost. Thank you.

[The prepared statement follows:]

**Statement of Lisa A. Nkonoki, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Tate  
George Dream Shot Foundation**

DADS & KIDS CAMPAIGN

Dads Do Make A Difference is a positive movement with a message. Working with Dads and kids is a transformative, and sometimes eye-opening experience. Most importantly, it's an opportunity to capture or recapture something we all have in common . . . a father. One of the DDMAD missions being, to increase the positive interactions of dads and other positive males and kids

Many of us are blessed to share the experience with a dad, and still far to many of us share a common void, a lifetime scar from the lack of having that father involved in our lives for a variety of reasons. In many cases, nothing will replace or erase the pain, which often times is far too great for many of us to bear. Studies clearly show the positive impact that an involved father has on his children whether they live in the same household or not, when it comes to education and self esteem. However, when this is not an option, we also know through the DDMAD Project, being able to talk about it, and realizing that you are not alone, and sharing other like experiences can be healthy, and hopefully will help us to positively move forward, leaving any negative feelings, or embarrassment behind and finally being at peace with our place, and those who put us here on this planet.

Whether your dad is a doctor, lawyer, singer teacher, janitor, chef, professional athlete, incarcerated or unemployed, they all share one common fact, and that is they are Fathers, and they have children who look like and sometimes act like them. We must dispel the myth that men are only worth the money that can be contributed to the life of that child. I cringe at the thought that my children, or any child, would only value themselves by their net worth, or their fathers contribution, or lack of one. We need to have a reality check on what we are considering of value when it comes to the lives of our children. Rich children and poor children share a common factor and that is they all need time and love. Though money can assist us all, it can not replace the love and effort put forth by any human being, especially our fathers.

One thing we all share is that our existence culminates from two human beings. We all have a story to tell, and DDMAD is listening! Some of our stories are positive, some sad, and some have very little to tell at all. Father's stories can, and do stir our emotions, either positively or negatively. The truth be told, DDMAD is about advocating for the positive influence that we know fathers can have on our lives and the lives of our children.

Together we can make a difference, and continue the challenge to uplift and empower the males who will undoubtedly leave an impact on our community. It's up to us to make it a positive experience for all.

As a single mom, I like many of you, struggled to find a happy balance for my children, and despite what I thought might be the perfect situation, it was not always inclusive of their dads, despite all of my efforts. The reactions from my children appeared fine for years, but as evidenced through a variety of sources, including schoolwork, just did not seem to be resolving it no matter how subtle.

After years of stressing about the fact of whether or not dad should be involved, does he even want to be involved, what about the money, or, I'm mad because of this or that from whenever or with whomever, I realized that, as the saying goes, when you have lemons, make lemonade! I realized there and then, that you build on what you have, and considering my children, I consider them to be rare gems to say the least (don't we all) one of the best ways to further enhance their already beautiful existence is to build upon from which they came. In all fairness it does take two individuals, committed or not, willing or unwilling to create such a jewel. To disregard any portion of that jewel, or to let your child disallow it is to take away from its total strength, breath, and beauty. For this reason alone, I am totally thankful to my children's dads, not to mention my own dad.

Though my brother and I were abandoned as infants by our biological father, a college professor, strange as it may seem I have grown to appreciate many of his qualities that continue in legacy through me, not to mention that awesome, hard to pronounce last name . . . Nkonoki!

In some ways, exploring what's good about your dad through direct contact, or relatives, allows us to further appreciate ourselves, and by dealing with and then letting go of any hurt and or resentment and anger allows many of us (including adults who have yet to heal their inner child) and the lives of their own children to be set free. If you have a dad in your life, don't profess to know what it feels like to wish to, or not have one in any situation. All we know is that a greater strength must prevail.

Look at the children of President John F. Kennedy, or, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Nothing could replace within these children their need for a father, but I am sure the positive support of their families, and some overall connection helped them endure. Yet they are all considered to carry on the legacy of their father, despite the brief time they spent with him in life. We all have a dad, whether alive, deceased, active or inactive, known or unknown he is in our genes living through us today as we exist.

Remember, kids have no choice as they join pre-established teams, some winning and some bound to lose despite all the best efforts. I don't know any team that won't come together at some point, and try to win again.

In this case we all must be team players trying to win on behalf of kids. That includes, schools, churches, community agencies, business, and government along with moms and dads, and most importantly you!

Winning Tips for your Team!

#### WHO WE ARE

The Tate George Dream Shot Foundation was founded seven years ago by then NBA player and former University of Connecticut basketball great Tate George, along with marketing executive Lisa Nkonoki, at that time a single mom. It is a comprehensive youth development organization designed to meet the needs of area youth and their families. Our main purpose is to nurture and inspire young people to pursue their dreams through the development of leadership skills, intellectual abilities, positive attitudes, and family values.

Some of the programs we have initiated to ensure this goal are: M y M's (Motivating Young Mothers), designed to uplift and empower at risk teens and young, unwed parents; Tate George Basketball Camp Scholarship program for disadvantaged youth; and, most notably, our Dads Do Make A Difference® program which currently sponsors the Dads/Kids Campaign developed by the foundation and adapted by the State of Connecticut Dept. of Social Services.

The support we have received to date has been deeply gratifying. Last year we were visited by Deputy Undersecretary of Education W. Wilson Goode and were favorably assessed as a program for other communities and agencies to follow. Long time supporters include University of Connecticut's head basketball coach Jim Calhoun, who has been a long time supporter, serving as a spokesperson for the Dads and Coaches campaign. Connecticut Gov. John Rowland and Lt. Gov. Jodi Rell have also served as official spokespersons in support of this campaign, with Lt. Gov. Rell going so far as to write to Lt. Gov.'s across the country recommending that they take a look at this program and adapt it to suit their specific needs.

We have also enjoyed tremendous support via endorsements and personal appearances from the likes of Earvin "Magic" Johnson, TV personality Gayle King and Grammy award winning recording artist Brian McKnight and a host of others.

#### CURRENT PROJECTS

The Dads Do Make A Difference® project is currently involved in developing several new programs. One, the Dads Tool Kit® for new fathers, will be administered in cooperation with area hospitals. The other, Dads' Backpack Day One program, is in collaboration with Head Start programs in New Britain, Hartford, and Manchester. In this program, fathers are encouraged to accompany their children on their first day in the program, where they will be presented with a Backpack filled with literature explaining to them the importance of staying involved in their children's education for the long haul.

In addition, we are also set to expand the Dads/Kids and Technology program whose goal is to recruit and train fathers to be able to work with their children to learn and use computer technology, interface with teachers, and assist with homework.

#### WHY NOW

Since 1950, the percentage of American children living in fatherless families has climbed from 6 to 24 percent as recently as 1994. These children are five times more likely to be poor and ten times more likely to be extremely poor. They are twice as likely to drop out of high school and significantly more likely to end up in foster or group care and in juvenile facilities. Girls from single parent families are at three times the risk of becoming unwed, teenage mothers. Boys whose fathers are absent have a much higher likelihood of growing up unemployed, incarcerated, and involved with their own children, ultimately perpetuating the same crippling cycle.

However, there is some good news. Major research released as recently as 1997 has shown that fathers who are involved with their children's education in a positive manner have a tremendous impact on offsetting many of these troubling statistics. Daughters are three times less likely to become pregnant as teens and sons are ten times less likely to land in jail. The list goes on from there outlining the tremendous, positive affects that a healthy, nurturing rapport between a father and his child has on the likelihood that that child will grow up to become a constructive, self-sufficient, and well-adjusted member of society.

It is definitely time to sit up and take notice that a father's beneficial impact on the growth, development, and welfare of his child is measurable by far more than simply the size of his paycheck, as significant as that may be. And that is the reason for the drive to initiate this project, for the time is now to capitalize on the growing awareness among all those who deal with children: clergy, educators, social workers, and other caregivers, that it is high time to foster a tide of reconciliation and return the father to a productive place within the life of his child.

#### OUR GOALS

Our goal is to change behavior. By achieving increased levels of positive, satisfactory interaction between participating fathers and their children, as well as increased levels of self-esteem among fathers, measured by their increased ability to set definable goals for themselves and demonstrate the self-initiative to realize them. In addition, it will be assessed by witnessing the level of satisfaction that participating children perceive in interactions with their fathers. These goals will be monitored through self-assessment questionnaires, program surveys and periodic focus groups.

#### OUR PARTNERS

Dads Do Make A Difference® has been cited by the National Center for Children in Poverty as the lead organization for the state of Connecticut in raising awareness about positive fatherhood initiatives since 1996.

DDMAD works closely with Head Start programs in New Britain, Hartford and Manchester and has partnered with the CT Dept. of Social Services to humanistically foster the involvement of fathers with their children via an effective program to advance the needs of this community.

We have also worked with the CT Dept. of Children and Families in helping to train parent and service providers dealing with fathers in encouraging them in being more involved with their children. We were the only organization in Connecticut, and one of the few in the Northeast, to receive a 1997 mini grant for fatherhood initiatives from the Dept of Health and Human Services for our programs.

#### HOW WILL SUCCESS BE DEFINED AND MEASURED?

Success will be defined as being able to demonstrate an increased level of satisfaction in the relationships between the participating fathers and their children along with an increased retention of these fathers as part of their families, regardless of whether or not they are in the home. Another key measure of success will be an increase in participating fathers' positive self-initiative to financially participate in the lives of their children, if that has been an issue. In addition, program participants will be tracked over a period of time to assess their ability to maintain these initiatives on their own. Studies can also be initiated comparing the status of the population of children of those who participate in our program with their counterparts in the general population.

#### TARGET POPULATION

Although Dads Do Make A Difference® programs welcome participation by all children and their families, the majority of those taking advantage of our services to date have been those from the lower-income, ethnic and urban communities. In addition, the majority of our population is English speaking, with literature made available in Spanish as needed.

#### PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT

Upon completion of any of our programs, participants will be asked to submit an evaluation sheet whereby they will be able to make known how the programs suited their needs and met their expectations. They and their families will also be asked to participate in focus groups from time to time. The results of these processes will

then be used to assist us in identifying target areas for future growth and development, as well as streamlining any existing, continuing programs.

In addition, program graduates can also be called upon to participate in outreach initiatives through churches, schools, and community centers within their communities, as well as at the Creative Center itself.

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### **Dads Do Make A Difference®—Program Overview**

- Father Advocacy and Information.—Dream Sheet Idea/Roadmap Development, education/training, technical assistance, info regarding court appearances, legislation updates, legal rights parameters, new initiatives, paternity determination, child support, job referrals, motivation/goal setting
- Awareness/PR Campaign.—Billboards, collateral pieces, mailings, surveys, focus groups, fact finding initiatives, info share with other groups
- Free scheduled events and activities.—Dads+Kids Night at the Movies, Dads+Kids Night at various sporting events (i.e., CT Wolves, CT Pride), Dads+Kids Night at the NBA, Annual Multicultural Book Fair, Dads+Kids Picnic & Fishing in the Park, Dads+Kids Holiday Feast, Dads+Kids Model Search, Dads+Kids at the Today Show
- Monthly Brainstorming Session for Service Providers.—Opportunity to provide technical assistance, outreach and support for new and existing Dads programs
- Hospital Paternity Initiative.—New Dads Tool Kit, Pre-school Back Pack, Teen Dads Pack, Reunited/Positive Male Pack
- Parenting Skills Training.—“All Star Dads” program teaching successful parenting techniques
- Open Forums for Dads.—Opportunity for Dads to constructively express their feelings and be heard
- Head Start Partnerships (Good Guys).—Current on-going working relationships with New Britain, Hartford, and Manchester to provide training, outreach, activities, etc.
- Dads Do Speakers Bureau.—Partnership with celebrities and entertainment figures
- Dads Info Van.—Traveling to parades and other public events to disseminate literature, raise awareness
- F.A.C.T. Blvd (Fathers And Children Together).—In school initiative to involve Dads in their child’s education, Dads/Kids + Technology
- Dads on Tour In partnership with Xando’s and Zuzu’s coffee bars

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### **Dream Shot Foundations/Dads Do Make A Difference**

#### DIRECT SERVICES FOR DADS AND KIDS

- Roger Vann, father of five and two year DDMAD program participant, realizes his dream of owning his own home
- Over 800 parents, educators, students, Dads, and service providers participated in various DDMAD educational training programs, technical assistance and referral initiatives
- Approximately 3,000 Dads & Kids serviced annually by DDMAD programs and events in cooperation with other organizations
- Dads + Kids Night at the Connecticut Pride
- Dads + Kids Night at the Movies, offering monthly passes to pre-screenings
- Dads Night Out
- Dads + Kids Night at the Connecticut Wolves Game
- Dads + Kids Night at area sporting events
- Unveiling of the first official “FACT BLVD/ Dads BLVD” in city schools along with Mayor Lucien Pawlak, U.S. Deputy Assistant Undersecretary of Education W. Wilson Goode, Congresswoman Nancy Johnson, and Superintendent of Schools, James Rhinesmith.
- Training Sessions with “Dads,” “Moms,” and “Kids”
- Candid “Dads” interviews on tape
- Multi-Cultural Book Festival at Hartford Stage
- Dads + Kids Model Search, City of Hartford, for 1999 Dads + Kids Calendar

- Annual Dads and Kids Fun Run/Walk and Picnic in the Park

## PUBLIC AWARENESS INITIATIVES

- “National Plug” for the “Dads Do Make A Difference” project, and sponsor Xando’s. Live appearance on NBC’s “Today Show,” including presentation of official Dads Do Make A Difference T-shirts to weatherman Al Roker and co-host Katie Couric.
  - Photo-op, and presented Vice President Al Gore with a “Dads Do Make A Difference” official T-shirt
  - Official visit by U.S. Dept. Assistant Under Secretary of Education W. Wilson Goode visits schools in Greater Hartford and New Britain, CT on behalf of the “Dads” project and to talk to parents, staff and students about the importance of “Dads.”
    - Dads + Kids Billboard—I 84 Hartford, Connecticut
    - State of Connecticut Proclamation—June 1998 “Dads month by Governor John G. Rowland
      - City of Hartford, Mayor Mike Peters, along with City Manager Sandra Kee Borgess proclaim June 1998 Dads “Month in the city of Hartford.”
      - More than half a million dollars in Electronic Media, Advertising and Promotion
      - Dads “Public Service Announcement” with businessman Brian Foley
      - Presented outline of DDMAD project along with complementary pin to President Clinton on Martha’s Vineyard
      - Several visits from U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services to Dads programs
      - Lead CT service organization cited by the Center for Children in Poverty
      - Approx. 1.8 million people reached to date through various DDMAD media campaigns
        - Press Event to Kick-off June 1998 as “Dads” Month, and calendar contest/Lisa utilized as expert for local CBS affiliate, Ch 3 interview “Dads”/visitation and custody case
        - ZuZu’s and Xando’s Coffee and Bar on tour with “Dads”—East Coast locations
        - National Football League and Major League Soccer Players appear at Washington, D.C. Xando’s, for a press event during Fathers Day week.
        - Included in the nationally distributed publication, “The ABC’s of Parent Involvement in Education,” published by the National Parents’ Day Coalition as a national information resource
          - DDMAD featured in Essence magazine
          - Lisa Nkonoki recognized as a 40 Under 40 business award recipient by the Hartford Business Journal for her contributions to the DDMAD project and community at large
          - Lisa Nkonoki awarded the 1999 CATCH (Committed Adults to Children in Hartford) award. Nominated by renowned City of Hartford Human Services Director, Dr. Ramon Rojano

## COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Dads Project in area schools/ PTO-PTA
- Offering technical assistance to local agencies such as Head Start, Family Services Division of the CT Dept. of Social Services, City of Hartford Human Services
- Met with key leaders in the “Dads” Movement Nationally
  - Interfacing with Head Start locally, regionally and nationally
  - Participated as panelists in “Hot Topics” Dads Workshop at a statewide conference for over 300+parents sponsored by “State of Connecticut DCF” that featured W. Wilson Goode from the U.S. Department of Education, and State Representative Kenneth Green.
    - Initiated Monthly “Dads” Brainstorming Sessions for Service providers, community leaders and fathers.
    - Training Sessions/Open Forums with community organizations/schools etc.

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Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much, Lisa. Vicki Turetsky, the senior staff attorney for the Center for Law and Social Policy. Nice to have you with us.

**STATEMENT OF VICKI TURETSKY, SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY,  
CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY**

Ms. TURETSKY. Thanks. Thanks for the opportunity to testify today. I am the granddaughter of a Baptist minister. [Laughter.]

My name is Vicki Turetsky. My work at the Center for Law and Social Policy is focused on child support. Before working at CLASP, I was employed by MDRC, and was involved in implementing Parents Fair Share. My testimony today will focus on child support distribution policies, and how they work against poor mothers and fathers.

Many poor mothers and fathers are capable of building workable partnerships to help each other support and raise their children. However, when a TANF father contributes financial support to his children, the money must be turned over to the State, and may not be used to support the children.

Because TANF fathers know that their child support is kept by the State and does not benefit their children, they are discouraged from participating in programs like Parents Fair Share and Partners for Fragile Families. New public investments in fatherhood programs may be met with only limited success unless we begin to treat child support as part of the family's own resources, rather than as an offset to welfare costs.

When the child support program was established, it mainly served as a cost recovery program for AFDC. The AFDC bargain was that the State would guarantee public support for poor families. In exchange, a mother needing AFDC would be required to turn over her right to child support owed by the father. Support collected from the father would be kept by the State and used to offset AFDC costs. That support is shared with the Federal Government.

The TANF bargain is supposed to be quite different. TANF evinces a clear public policy preference that poor families rely on private resources before public resources. Under TANF, mothers and fathers are expected to work and support their children from their own resources before turning to the Government. However, the basic rule remains the same under TANF as it did under AFDC. Child support owed or collected when a family receives TANF belongs to the State, not the family.

Current child support distribution rules make no sense to poor mothers and fathers, and they have interfered with States' abilities to implement policies supportive of family self-sufficiency and family formation. For the most part, poor mothers and fathers want to do right by their children. The research indicates that many poor fathers see their children on a regular basis, particularly when they are small.

The parents want to be able to use their own money to support their children. When poor mothers look at their budget, they would prefer to use their own money, their earnings and their child support, even if it means reduced benefits. Poor fathers want to know that their money is contributing directly to their child's support.

We have created an untenable situation for poor fathers and mothers who want to improve their children's lives. We tell poor mothers and fathers that we want them to work together, we want them to support and raise their children together, we tell them we



want them to rely on their own private resources before seeking public help. However, our child support distribution rules send a contradictory message: Child support is off limits for TANF families seeking to budget and plan for the children's support.

If the father has \$50 in his pocket, he might rightly perceive that his choice is one between paying back the State and buying shoes for his child. Sometimes he pays sporadic informal support for the children. Yet no one is well served when parents agree to under-the-table payments and avoid the formal child support system. If a TANF mother accepts informal support, she is vulnerable to welfare fraud prosecution. In addition, informal payments are more sporadic and typically smaller than formal support payments. If a TANF father pays informal support, his payment will not be credited on his account through the formal system, and he will be liable for the full payment.

Distribution changes enacted in PRWORA are intended to move States in a family first direction that gets more money in the hands of post-TANF families. This is the right direction. However, the rules are extremely complicated and costly to administer in practice. When fully implemented, the new law will require States to maintain 10 accounting buckets.

The sheer complexity of the new rules will aggravate a problem that already exists in many States: timely and accurate distribution of child support once the family leaves TANF. Although current support is supposed to be paid to families as soon as they leave TANF, the child support agency sometimes has trouble turning that money around, and sometimes it takes months for the family to get the support after they have left TANF.

I want to commend you to Senator Kohl's proposal, which would allow States to pass through all support to TANF and former TANF families. CLASP supports this direction. States should be given the option to pass through and the option to disregard all support, including the Federal and the State shares. In addition, we think that the distribution rules ought to be simplified across the board.

Three States, Wisconsin, Connecticut, and Vermont, are currently operating programs like this under waiver. Early evaluation results in Wisconsin indicate that families who get the full pass through are more likely to leave W-2 sooner. In addition, State costs are about the same, even though they are giving up their State share of welfare collections.

In sum, effective child support enforcement should be used to help fulfill the goals of TANF. Child support enforcement supports TANF goals perhaps than any public policy approach. Child support distribution rules should help rather than undermine the efforts of poor mothers and fathers to work together. Child support should be treated as a family resource rather than as recouped public debt. Thank you.

[The prepared statement follows:]

**Statement of Vicki Turetsky, Senior Staff Attorney, Center for Law and Social Policy**

Chairwoman Johnson and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on ways to encourage poor mothers and fathers to work together to support and raise their children. I am a Senior Staff Attorney at the

Center for Law and Social Policy. CLASP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization engaged in analysis, technical assistance and advocacy on issues affecting low-income families. We do not receive any federal funding. My focus at CLASP is child support. Before working at CLASP, I was employed by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), and helped implement the Parents' Fair Share pilot project.

Many poor fathers and mothers are capable of building workable partnerships to help each other support and raise their children. However, in study after study, poor mothers and fathers of children receiving TANF say there is a fundamental contradiction in the child support system that undermines their ability to work together to support their children. The contradiction is that when a TANF father contributes financial support to his children, the money must be turned over to the state and may not be used to support the children. Because TANF fathers know that their child support payments are kept by the state and do not benefit their children, they are discouraged from participating in programs like Parents' Fair Share.

My testimony today will specifically address the negative impact of current child support assignment and distribution policies on the ability and willingness of poor mothers and fathers to work together on behalf of their children. New public investments in fatherhood programs may be met with only limited success unless we begin to treat child support as part of the family's own resources, rather than as an offset to public welfare costs. Many researchers, state administrators, and advocates for poor mothers and poor fathers agree that the child support program needs to be realigned with TANF self-sufficiency and family formation goals.

To bring the program into better alignment with TANF, PRWORA "family first" distribution rules should be expanded. In addition, states should be given the option to distribute all support paid by fathers for their children, regardless of welfare status.

#### THE CHILD SUPPORT SYSTEM EMPHASIZES WELFARE COST RECOVERY

When the child support program was established, it mainly functioned as an AFDC cost-recovery mechanism. The AFDC bargain was that the state would guarantee public support for poor families until their children reached the age of majority. In exchange, a mother needing AFDC would be required to assign (turn over) to the state any rights to private support owed by the father. The assignment applied to child support owed before the family went on welfare, as well as support owed while the family received welfare. The state then would attempt to collect the child support from the father. Support collected from the father would be kept by the state and shared with the federal government as partial reimbursement for AFDC costs.

The TANF bargain is supposed to be quite different. TANF evinces a clear public policy preference that poor families rely on private resources before public resources. Under TANF, mothers are expected to work and to support their children from their own resources whenever they can. This expectation that mothers develop their capacity for self-support is backed by time limits. Fathers, too, are told they must help support their children. The expectation that fathers will help support their children is backed by strengthened paternity establishment and child support enforcement procedures enacted under PRWORA.

The "families first" child support distribution policies adopted under PRWORA was an important first step in allowing families leaving TANF to treat child support as a family resource. The new distribution policy gives priority to child support payments owed to former welfare families over payments owed to the state. The new distribution policy also allows families to keep some of the child support owed before the family went on assistance. However, the basic rule remains the same under TANF as it did under AFDC: child support owed or collected while a family receives TANF belongs to the state, not the family.

The child support program is undergoing dramatic structural changes due in part to TANF caseload declines. In 1978, more than 75 percent of the child support caseload involved current AFDC families. By 2000, less than 20 percent of the child support caseload will be current TANF families. The vast majority of cases will involve low-income working families who have left or stayed off of TANF. The child support program's mission is evolving toward helping low-income families reduce welfare receipt and sustain low-wage employment. Child support distribution policies should support, not undercut, these TANF goals.

Instead, program's reimbursement-driven distribution policies have interfered with states' ability to implement policies supportive of family self-sufficiency. The recent changes in TANF, combined with long-term trends in the child support caseload, have resulted in a misalignment between the program's ability to deliver effec-

tive services to families and a program structure that emphasizes cost-recovery. The child support program, like other human services program, must be brought into realignment with TANF goals and the realities of time-limited welfare.

#### CHILD SUPPORT DISTRIBUTION POLICIES WORK AGAINST POOR FATHERS AND MOTHERS

Current child support distribution rules make no sense to poor mothers and fathers. Parents want to be able to use their own money to support their children. When poor mothers look at their budget, they would prefer to keep their own money—their paycheck and child support—even if it means reduced public benefits. Poor fathers want to know that their money is contributing directly to their children's support. Yet poor mothers and fathers both know that unless the father can pay enough keep their children off of TANF, his support payments will be kept by the state and will not directly benefit their children.<sup>1</sup>

For the most part, poor mothers and fathers want to do right by their children. Most fathers know they should take responsibility for their children. The research indicates that many poor fathers see their children on a regular basis, particularly when their children are small. Child support payments may increase the frequency of contact between fathers and children and fathers' involvement in their children's upbringing. Many mothers report that they encourage their children's emotional relationship with their father and his family, and try to keep the father involved in the children's lives when feasible.

Many mothers and fathers are aware of each other's economic circumstances, and repeatedly re-negotiate their financial arrangements. Sometimes she holds back on child support enforcement. Sometimes, he pays informal financial support for the children. Sometimes, he does not pay regular support, but makes irregular in-kind contributions, such as diapers, school clothes, and Christmas gifts. Sometimes, he pays out of both pockets—he pays off the state a little and he pays her a little. Sometimes she settles for non-financial support. Sometimes, they fight about the money. Sometimes, he walks away.

We have created an untenable situation for poor fathers and mothers who want to improve their children's lives, but can not fully support their children without some public help. When TANF fathers pay through the formal child support system, their payments usually do not go back to their children. If the father has \$50 in his pocket, he may rightly perceive his choice as one between paying back the state and buying shoes for his child.

Yet no one is well served when parents agree to under-the table payments and avoid the formal child support system. If a TANF mother accepts informal support from the father, she is vulnerable to a welfare fraud prosecution. In addition, informal payments are made at the discretion of the father. They are likely to decrease as the child gets older and the parents' relationship changes. If a TANF father pays the mother informal support, his payment will not be credited through the formal system, and he will be liable for full payment. Informal payments may be smaller and less regular, and there may be more disputes about the amounts paid.

We tell poor mothers and fathers that we want them to work together to support and raise their children. We tell them that we want them to rely on their own resources before seeking public help. However, our child support distribution policies send a contradictory message: child support payments are off-limits for families seeking to budget and plan for their children's support.

#### WELFARE ARREARS OFTEN CREATE UNMANAGEABLE DEBT

Poor fathers often complain about child support arrears. The arrears problem is part and parcel of a child support system that is based on welfare cost recovery. If a poor father's children are on welfare, his support order often is not based solely on his ability to pay. Instead, the order may be "front-loaded" with unreimbursed state debt, such as pre-order welfare benefits or Medicaid expenditures paid for the child. Childbirth costs may be added to the initial order. This can amount to tens of thousands of dollars when a child is born prematurely or with other health problems. Paternity testing costs, litigation costs, and interest may be added to the support order. "Front-loading" the order with costs that are unrelated to the poor father's ability to pay can create an unmanageable debt right from the beginning. As a practical matter, they often create a debt that will never be paid.

<sup>1</sup>Since most custodial parents are mothers and most noncustodial parents are fathers, this testimony uses the term mother to refer to custodial parents and father to refer to noncustodial parents. Obviously, the situation can be, and sometimes is, reversed.

In many states, the state attempts to collect support from fathers even when they are living with their children in a two-parent family. Sometimes, they do not tell the welfare agency that they are living together because of policies basing welfare eligibility on father absence. Sometimes, they do tell the agency, but it does not operate to suspend the child support order and "state debt." In addition, the state may attempt to collect when the parents' financial circumstances worsen. For example, the father may lose his job after the order was entered.

State child support programs need to deal with the problem of arrearages owed by parents, that will never be paid off. The best approach is to begin treating child support as money owed to the family, not to the state. Much of the arrearages on the books stem from state practices that use the child support system to recoup welfare and Medicaid costs. Public policies affecting the treatment of arrearages should reflect child support program goals of increasing family self-sufficiency and supporting family formation, not cost recovery.

In addition, state child support programs should implement review and modification procedures that (1) make it easy for parents to request a review of the child support order and accumulated arrearages, (2) respond quickly and flexibly to mothers' and fathers' requests for review of the order and adjust the order upward or downward according to the parents' financial and family circumstances, and (3) allow for a review and modification of accumulated arrearages.

The cure for welfare debt is not to repeal the Bradley amendment. The Bradley amendment, enacted as a part of the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1986,<sup>2</sup> requires that child support payments owed under a support order be treated just as seriously as any other state court judgment. However, as with any other judgment, child support orders may be compromised or settled by agreement of the parties according to state law.

If I fall behind on my credit card payments, the credit card company can take me to court and obtain a judgment against me. A court can not undo that judgment at the request of one party if it was properly entered. However, I can sit down with the credit card company and tell them that I can not afford to repay the debt. The credit card company can work out a settlement with me and waive enforcement of the judgment. Similarly, if I can not afford to pay my child support order, the state child support agency and/or custodial parent can suspend, compromise, or forgive arrearages owed to the agency or parent. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently reissued a policy statement clearly stating that states have the authority to suspend, compromise, or forgive TANF arrearages owed to the government.

#### CURRENT DISTRIBUTION RULES WORK AGAINST FAMILIES LEAVING TANF

Distribution changes enacted in PRWORA are intended to move states in a "family-first" direction that gets more money in the hands of post-TANF families. However, they are extremely complicated and costly to administer in practice. They are the uneasy result of legislative compromise between contradictory program goals of helping families become and remain self-sufficient and recovering welfare costs. When fully implemented, the new law will require states to maintain ten accounting "buckets."

The sheer complexity of PRWORA distribution rules will aggravate a problem that already exists for many states: accurate and timely payment of child support to former TANF families. Although current support is supposed to be paid to families as soon as they leave TANF, the child support agency sometimes continues to retain current support for months after welfare exits. Instead of stabilizing the family's child support income before the family leaves TANF, child support is interrupted right at the point of exit and for some months thereafter.

The complexity of new distribution rules is also costly for the states and federal government. Problems with automating complicated distribution rules have been cited by many federal and state administrators as a contributing cause of systems delays and costs. The new rules require disproportionate training and staff time devoted to administering the rules, correcting errors, and explaining hard-to-understand decisions to parents. Because the new policy is so difficult to explain and administer, it will further erode confidence in the program's fairness and accuracy. Bluntly put, the administrative costs and costs related to program credibility of maintaining an overly complex distribution policy squanders limited program resources.

Under PRWORA, states have the option to distribute the state share of child support to families, but they must return the federal share to the federal government. This is a change from previous policy, when states were required to pass through

<sup>2</sup> 42 U.S.C. 666(a)(9).

and disregard \$50 to AFDC families “off the top” of collections, that is, before the federal and state shares of collections were calculated. Almost half of states continue to pass through some amount of child support from the state share. However, under current distribution rules, the state’s decision to pass through part of the state share to families actually increases the complexity of distribution by adding another distribution “pot.”

#### CHILD SUPPORT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO REINFORCE TANF GOALS

TANF evinces a clear public policy preference that low-income families rely on private resources before public resources. The stated purposes of TANF are to: (1) provide assistance to needy families; (2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. The research indicates that effective child support enforcement supports TANF goals, perhaps better than any other public policy approach:

- Emerging research suggests that stronger child support enforcement will reduce non-marital births, divorce, and marital disruption. States with higher rates of paternity establishment and effective child support collection systems have lower rates of nonmarital births. A \$136 increase in IV-D expenditures per female-headed family leads to a 2.3 percent lower nonmarital birth rate. By contrast, a \$1,253 decrease in annual welfare benefits is only associated with a 0.063 percent decrease in non-marital fertility. Child support enforcement not only deters births more effectively than welfare cuts, but it increases the income of children already born.
- The number of studies documenting that child support reduces poverty and welfare dependence is now quite large. States with effective child support collection systems have significantly lower welfare caseloads. Child support is playing a moderate to large (and unrecognized) role in declining welfare caseloads. Enforcing child support is more efficient than lowering welfare benefits in moving families out of caseloads and preventing them from entering caseloads. While cuts in welfare benefits reduces the economic well-being of single-mother families, enforcing child support increases it.
- Cost avoidance research from Washington State indicates a synergic effect between child support and earnings once the family leaves assistance and begins receiving distributed collections. Compared to welfare, child support is more complementary to work because child support payments do not decline like welfare benefits when the mother’s earnings increase.
- There is growing evidence that child support enforcement has improved collections, especially among fathers whose children are likely to be on welfare. From 1980 to 1996, the proportion of unmarried mothers who were on welfare and had a child support collection nearly tripled. However, the significant increase in child support receipt rates has been masked, because the caseload composition has shifted away from divorced families to non-marital families. Strikingly, welfare collections remained stable or even increased in some states for the first four years after TANF caseloads began to decline.

#### SIMPLIFY DISTRIBUTION AND GIVE STATES THE OPTION TO PASS THROUGH ALL SUPPORT TO FAMILIES

Senator Kohl intends to reintroduce a version of his bill last session that would allow states to pass through all support to TANF and former TANF families. CLASP strongly supports this direction. States should be given the option to distribute all child support, including federal and state shares, to families. CLASP also recommends that current distribution rules should be simplified across-the-board in order to put more child support in the hands of families.

By allowing states the option to distribute all support to families, Congress would give states the flexibility to bring their child support program into better alignment with TANF goals. States would be better able to use child support as part of a strategy to help families reduce their dependence on TANF, help poor fathers improve their earnings capacity, help poor and low-income mothers and fathers to combine their earnings to support and raise their children, and promote family formation goals:

- Distributing child support to the TANF family increases the likelihood that child support payments will be in place and will continue uninterrupted when a family leaves TANF.
- It also gives the mother with earnings an accurate sense of the amount and regularity of child support payments available to combine with her earnings.

- It allows the father to use his money to help support his children.
- It gives both parents a greater incentive to cooperate with formal collection efforts.

A state option to disregard some or all of the support in determining TANF eligibility and benefits is an important component to the proposal. Parents have a greater incentive to cooperate when child support distributed to the family actually increases their children's financial well-being. When child support improves family income, it boosts both parents' work effort and may help the family leave TANF sooner. States need the flexibility to set child support disregard policies in a way that best fits their TANF program.

Three states currently have waivers to distribute all current support and to disregard some or all of the support for TANF purposes. Wisconsin passes through and disregards all support, while Connecticut passes through all support and disregards \$100, and Vermont passes through all support and disregards \$50. Evaluation efforts are underway, and while it is too early to assess the impact of these policies, Wisconsin and Vermont have reported early results:

- Early results in Wisconsin suggest that families receiving the full pass-through and disregard who were initially assigned to a lower W-2 tier were more likely to leave welfare by the fifth quarter than control-group families. In addition, while the state retained less child support, net government costs were not significantly different.
- Early results in Vermont suggest that the state's pass-through policy increased the average child support payment and the proportion of families receiving child support.

In summary, child support distribution rules should be changed to allow states to pass through all support for TANF and former TANF families. In a post-TANF world, it is more important than ever that child support distribution rules satisfy several principles. First, the rules should help, rather than undermine, the efforts of poor mothers and fathers to work together to support their children. Second, child support should be treated as a family resource, not recouped public debt. Third, the distribution rules should make sense to families and be simple to administer and explain. The job of the child support program should be to establish paternity, collect support, and get the support to the family. The job of the TANF program should be to set policies related to child support income that encourage poor fathers to help support their children and that help families who are exiting TANF.

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Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Thank you very much for your testimony. We have talked about this before. As one who fought hard to get at least arrearages paid first to the families before the States and failed, we got half and half, the barriers to this kind of change are high. But it is absolutely imperative that we make this change, because you are absolutely right about all the human implications of that support going directly from the father to the mother and the child. So we look forward to working with you on that, and to straightening out the problems over time that make it difficult.

I wanted to ask you, Mr. Ballard, how much does it cost to run your programs? You have really been out in the field and working for quite a long time now. I very much like the idea in your program, and there's a lot of good ideas on the table, but I do like the idea that there's a couple there modeling marriage relationships, because I think one of the reasons that these early relationships don't survive is the same reason that many marriages end up in divorce. Marriage isn't easy, and it takes time to figure out how to make it through. The legal tie sometimes holds you together during periods of frustration, disagreement, disappointment. That's really actually how we learn that being there matters, and staying power wins. So I think the idea of the couple in the community modeling the relationship is really an interesting one, as well as your sort

of home-based view, where you go into homes, but you give services from home.

I would like to just comment too that I was very pleased in our earlier discussion that you paid the man and his wife equally, just for the record, and well, I might add.

So what does it cost to run your program? Can you estimate what the cost per father is for a program like yours?

Mr. BALLARD. Yes, Madam Chair. But before I do that, I would like to introduce people from my offices. We have the Daleys from Cleveland, OH. We have the Jenkins here in the District. And we have the Halls from Nashville, TN. They came up to demonstrate the importance of couples living in the community, and sharing these services with fathers and their families.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. That's excellent, and welcome to you. We look forward to your commenting to us afterward.

Mr. BALLARD. It costs about \$3,200 to serve one person. However, we find that we are unable to just serve the father. In most cases, we have to serve the mother first. Before we can even get to him, she has to be approached. As the young lady on the end of the panel stated, unless her heart changes toward the father, we can't get to him. So we go out into the community, doing outreach door-to-door, and we get to her first, work with her, and then she gives us the father's name.

Now the children in many cases are angry. So the child also has to be worked with. So it's \$3,200 in average cost to work with the father, and then add on as we begin to involve other members, including his parents, as well as the girl's parents.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. So really to reach the circle of the whole family, that's not really included in your \$3,200 per father.

Mr. BALLARD. No. See, we spend about 3 to 4 hours a week with the father in his home, providing very intensive services. If we get a call at 2 a.m., the person gets out of bed and goes to his home. Many times there is violence going on, and we resolve that situation first. So we are available 24-7, and we'll come out to his home at his call. We have gotten calls from females as well, and we go out to serve them as well. But we have to, in order to reach fathers, go beyond child support. This is beyond the legal issue. This is actively building families that never were, and creating a model for the father to see for the very first time.

Often the father is very angry about his dad, angry about the abandonment, and that takes a lot of effort and time to work with him to get him past that anger in order for him to begin to feel good about himself and then about his child.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Interesting. Thank you very much. It's very interesting.

Mr. Johnson, in terms of the program you have been working on, what do you estimate that it will cost, and how long do you estimate that it will take you to get your project launched?

Mr. JEFFERY JOHNSON. I think that we are in the process of getting a Federal waiver. I anticipate that we will be fully implemented in the next several weeks. But I do think that Mr. Ballard's cost estimates are pretty good. But I would add that one of the things we want to do in our program is to move the Parents Fair

Share model forward. That is by building a skills training component right into the program. I do think that we cannot take employment training, leave it to chance. So if I estimate with a real solid employment training component, based on some successful programs, one in New York called the Strive ASAP program, it is going to be about an additional \$5,000 or so to go along with kind of the baseline kind of support services.

But again, I do think that that investment in that type of employment is going to have lasting effects from a career perspective. In the ASAP program, for example, many of the men they were serving met the profile of the fathers coming through our program. So we referred to them as welfare dads or dead-broke dads. So they were able to get them in a job. The first job they could get after 3 weeks of training. They went out and worked for 6 months. They had a post-placement service where they came back in the program after demonstrating a track record in the work environment. They worked with Concordia College and a number of financial institutions in New York City, and were able to develop some condensed training modules based on a 2-year curriculum. They were able to condense it to 6 months, get those men through the program, and that they were able to achieve about a 75-percent placement rate.

But I think that the real significant finding over 2 years was the fact that the average wage growth was between \$6,000 and \$9,000. So it just says that when we have these men in a captive situation, let's do the whole job. I think that these partnerships that we have established with various organizations enable us to put in place what I think will be the most comprehensive service delivery system in the whole fatherhood field. I just think that we have to do the whole job. I think that it is going to appear to be costly on the front end. But I think on the back end of it, we are going to have reduced men in jails and more men being productive members in our community.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Cardin.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me thank all six of our witnesses. I found your testimony very encouraging, that we have people on the front line doing what you are doing. So first my congratulations, and thank you for sharing your experiences with us.

Ms. Turetsky, I want to underscore what Chairman Johnson said about the current child support payments by fathers in many cases going to the welfare agency rather than to the family causes major problems of involvement of the father in the financial planning of the household. That is something I hope that we could deal with. But you raised a very interesting point in that it may not even cost us any more money.

Ms. TURETSKY. Yes. There are a number of studies going on right now, including the States that have put a full pass through into place. The studies are too early to give you definitive results, but they are looking quite promising.

I might add that there are a number of State child support directors who feel much as I do about the proper role of child support in a family's life and the costliness in terms of families' lives and in terms of complicated rules within the current child support system.



Mr. CARDIN. Those studies would be very helpful to us because it's good for us to do what's right, but if we can also do it without costing additional resources, that's even better for us.

Mr. Raesz, on your point on the Bradley amendment, I must acknowledge, I had never really focused in on that and the hardships that that can cause. But let me just suggest, it might be a better system if there was in place a way for review of child support orders on a periodic basis so that you don't reach a situation where a father gets out of hand, and that it would then mitigate or negate the need to do retroactive adjustments if we kept more current to the fathers' financial ability.

There are a lot of child support orders out there that need to be adjusted upwards, but aren't because no one looks at it for a long period of time.

Mr. RAESZ. I heard you mention that earlier. I think that's a wonderful idea. But there are a number of individuals out there right now that are faced with large arrearages that accumulated during periods of illness or injury, periods where they had possession of their children. The fathers have possession of the children, but because of the absence of a court order being modified, they are faced with paying arrearages at a time they are in possession.

So I would definitely support your efforts, seeing that review takes place periodically. I also ask for some help for those individuals that it's too late.

Mr. CARDIN. That's fair enough. I think it should be balanced in both regards. I agree with your point. I am glad to see that you agree with mine. It makes life a little bit easier.

Mr. JOHNSON, you mentioned in your written testimony, support for the legislation that I introduced on behalf of the Administration to modify the welfare to work programs. I think it is important to point out that the current program, particularly the competitive grants, are being used—can be used by the States for initiatives in fatherhood programs on employment, counseling, and other types of services that can be provided through the use of the Federal Welfare-to-Work program, but that the current restrictions on the formula funds make it very difficult for States to be able to deal with people who really need help.

The legislation that I filed relaxes those requirements, to give the States more flexibility on the use of that money. I just really wanted to give you a chance to comment on that, as to whether you think that would be useful in encouraging more programs out there to help fathers be more responsible in their families.

Mr. JEFFERY JOHNSON. I think so. I'm glad that there was a bill out there that talks about fathers. I appreciate the bill that you put forth.

But I do think, it's not only some of the restrictions in the formula, but it is also a matter of technical assistance. I think that this Welfare-to-Work program probably has more flexibility. I have been around employment most of my career. It probably has more flexibility to do this work than we really need. But I think that a lot of States are skittish about doing a lot of work with non-custodial fathers because they don't know how. I think that they have not been able to, up until recently, find programs like Mr. Ballard's

and others, to really get an idea of how to really work with these non-custodial fathers. I think that that is important.

Another part of the Welfare-to-Work reauthorization that we particularly like, is the fact of the whole focus on personal responsibility. We do think that given some of the life challenges of some of these men, they need structure. You know, you go into any school system, and you talk to the teachers working with some of these young boys, they will say that they need structure, and they need structure to find themselves sometimes because they are not getting that structure from home. I do think that at some point, men discover themselves, find themselves, in that they are in essence taught how to fish. But I do think this notion of a personal responsibility contract as being a necessary part of a programmatic structure for these programs is a critical piece. We support those elements of the bill.

Mr. CARDIN. Finally, just one additional question. That is, how much of a problem are drugs and alcohol addiction and abuse in dealing with a non-custodial parent? The statistics given to us by the last panel did not indicate a very high percentage of parents, children born out of wedlock being that—used 8 percent is what's here. I am just curious whether your personal observations indicate how serious substance abuse is in dealing with the problem we're trying to confront.

Mr. JEFFERY JOHNSON. It is a problem. I think that use varies, but you are also talking about distribution. I mean in that there are countless studies that suggest that a lot of young males who get involved in the drug area don't use, but actually distribute as a way to generate income. So I would say that while those statistics are relatively low, I do think that drug abuse is a problem.

There's a 20-year history on this, in fact. Jim Levin, who is now the vice president of the Thousand Work Institute, used to run what is to say the first full service fatherhood program back in the mid-1970's. It was an outgrowth of programs serving mothers. He began to work with these fathers to really try to determine what would be the incentives necessary to get them involved. What he found out was that they had multiple problems. They need jobs. They had substance abuse problems.

I can tell you from my own experience in working with many sites across Parents Fair Share and the Young Unwed Fathers pilot project, that when I would go to the sites following up some of the work they were doing around our peer support groups, they would have legal programs. The legal programs were not for issues of child support, but because of trouble with the law around drugs. I mean either use or distribution.

So I would say, Mr. Cardin, that it is a problem, and that even though they may not be using it, that does not mean necessarily that they are not involved in it.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Just as a final question, and we are going to have to vote soon, so I would like to have a little chance for those who are here to comment to us if they want to individually. Each of you in your own way, particularly some of you more than others, have been out there on the front lines. Do you find it hard to link the people in your programs into Department

of Labor programs, Department of Social Service programs, you know, to hook it in and coordinate with existing resources?

Ms. TURETSKY. Mrs. Johnson, may I comment?

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Yes.

Ms. TURETSKY. This is new work. That means that no matter which agency you pick, it is going to involve a stretch, and it's going to require linkages with other agencies.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Good thought, Vicki.

Ms. TURETSKY. If you put it in the Child Support Agency, they don't do employment. If you put it in the TANF agencies, they don't do men. So it is a matter of, as difficult as it is, it is going to be necessary to link these programs, and to have different programs do different pieces. But case management there is really important, having one key agency that works with the guy and brokers services, it is going to be critical.

Mr. BALLARD. I think one of the most important things is to be able to establish a rapport with the father and the family. The reason we move into the community is because people want to know you care. Often they complain about people who work in the community, but live some place else. So I think by going into the community—in fact, the Jenkins here moved from California to Ward 7 in Washington, and they are buying a home. That is a great commitment to that community.

We have noticed over the years everyone is moving out of the community into the suburbs, and leaving people who are poor and disconnected. So if you are going to right the problem, we must move back into that community and not only provide a service, but do it in a loving and a compassionate way.

Mr. JEFFERY JOHNSON. Madam Chair, I have a member of my staff, Dianna Durham-McCloud, who is a former State director of child support in the State of Illinois. She was one of the pioneers in actually using the child support system as a way to begin to work with non-custodial parents in different ways. I would just like her to comment, because I do think that she talks about ways in which child support can do this in some creative ways involving partnership, as Vicki has alluded to.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. OK. While she is coming to the microphone—

Ms. DURHAM-MCLOUD. When we would bring men before the bar, on a "Rule to Show Cause," what we found in Cook County, IL, was that 56 percent of those young men said, "We would love to pay child support, if we had anything to pay it on." So what we started to do, instead of simply incarcerating them which cost us about \$17,500 a year, we would have done better to simply give that to the family, if we are really going to expend that kind of money, why not do something that strengthens families.

What we started to do was to work with those fathers. We reached out to a community-based organization that could do the hard one-on-one case management.

I don't know of a child support worker in America who needs another thing to do. But it did make a lot of sense for us to be the point of information, brokering and referral for services. We would refer them to the Parental Involvement Program. We would refer them to mental health. We worked with the Department of Correc-

tions in order to identify those fathers who were in prison. And together—and you're right, it was tough—we stayed up a lot of nights, and we had lots of meetings before the meetings and after the meetings. But with the support and the cooperation of a number of forward-thinking folks in our State, we were able to get it started and to keep it going. But it was hard work.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. Would you agree with Mr. Raesz's recommendation that there be some flexibility in adjusting arrearages and the history of non-payment so that they can get out from under this?

Ms. DURHAM-MCLOUD. Absolutely, Madam Chair. It is our desire to make child support orders consistent with the father's ability to pay. If a father is incarcerated, the prospects that they could pay \$300 or \$400 a month are slim and none. So it makes no sense to give them that extra burden. Remember, in some of our States, we also charge interest and in some other States compounded interest. We can make it literally impossible for low-income fathers to ever become current with their obligation.

I am working with a young man now, who I told him already, he will be paying child support well past the time that he starts—

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. George, I would like to recognize you. When I was talking with the folks in your group, it was very clear that there was tremendous need for it among these young men, to at least know their legal rights.

Reverend GAY. Absolutely.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. In child support and visitation.

Reverend GAY. Which was going to be my comment. I am finding that collaboration is only used on a very base referral basis. They want to give you a name, and that's as far as they want to go. They don't share any resources, they don't share any knowledge. They give you a name. And then one of my youth that you had met was referred by let's say disciplinary people. As soon as they got a chance, knowing that he was in the program, knowing that he was doing better than he had been, they sent him away. Those same people that referred him.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. This is a very big concern to me.

Reverend GAY. It's not collaboration at all. In my viewpoint, what's happening maybe in my State and other States, is people see a pile of money. They go after the money. They don't really care about the client. They don't really care about what's going on. All they care about is there's a pile of money I can get, and that's about it.

Chairman JOHNSON of Connecticut. We are really seeing a lot of these problems. The shelters are telling me, a lot of the transitional living places are telling me if the person is homicidal or suicidal, you can get an evaluation, but then you can't get treatment.

So we do have to look at some of the systemic issues involved in this idea of coordinating services, and trying to deliver them more effectively. I think we also have to keep in mind that this will be a new effort. So it's not going to work exactly right at the beginning.

But thank you all very much for your input. It has been very helpful to have you from all different sectors of this effort. We thank you for your thoughtful comments.

[Whereupon, at 4:19 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

[Submissions for the record follow:]

**Statement of David L. Manville, ACSW/LMFT, Family Counseling and Mediation Department Supervisor, Family Counseling and Mediation Department, Detroit, Michigan**

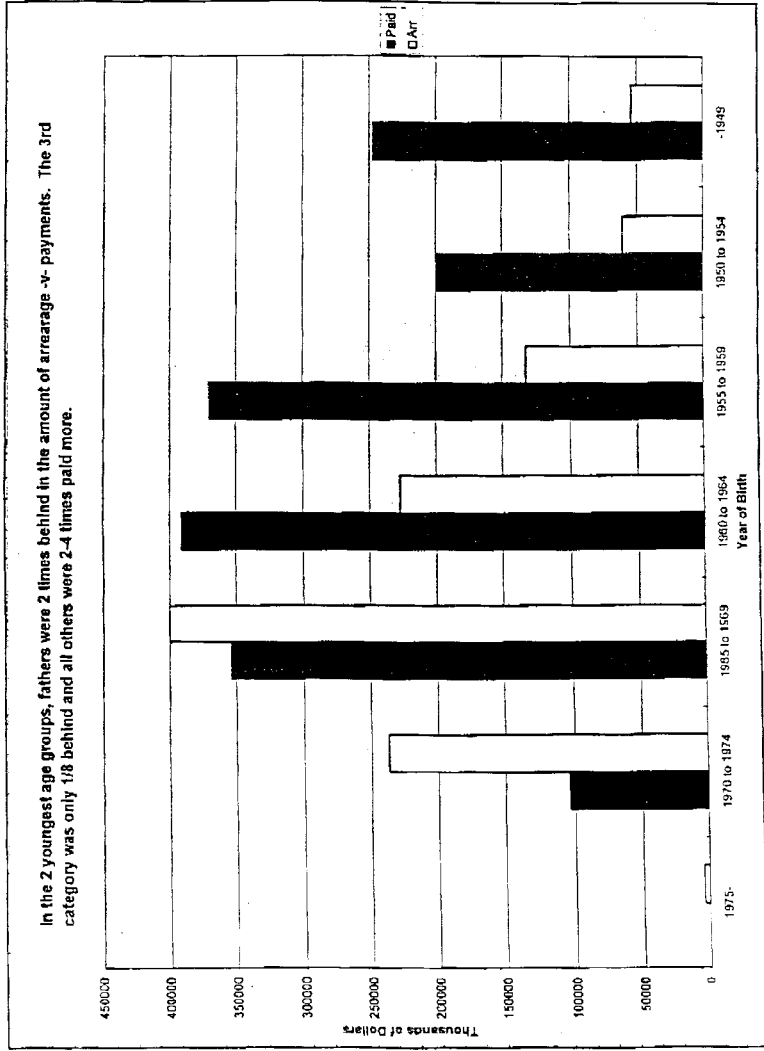
I welcome the opportunity to submit written testimony on the issue of fatherhood to the Human Resources Subcommittee. This vital interest needs to be addressed, not just by this Subcommittee but by the current Administration. In September 1998, I was afforded the honor of preparing material and presenting to the "White House Commission on Public Policy" regarding the Fathers Count Act of 1998.

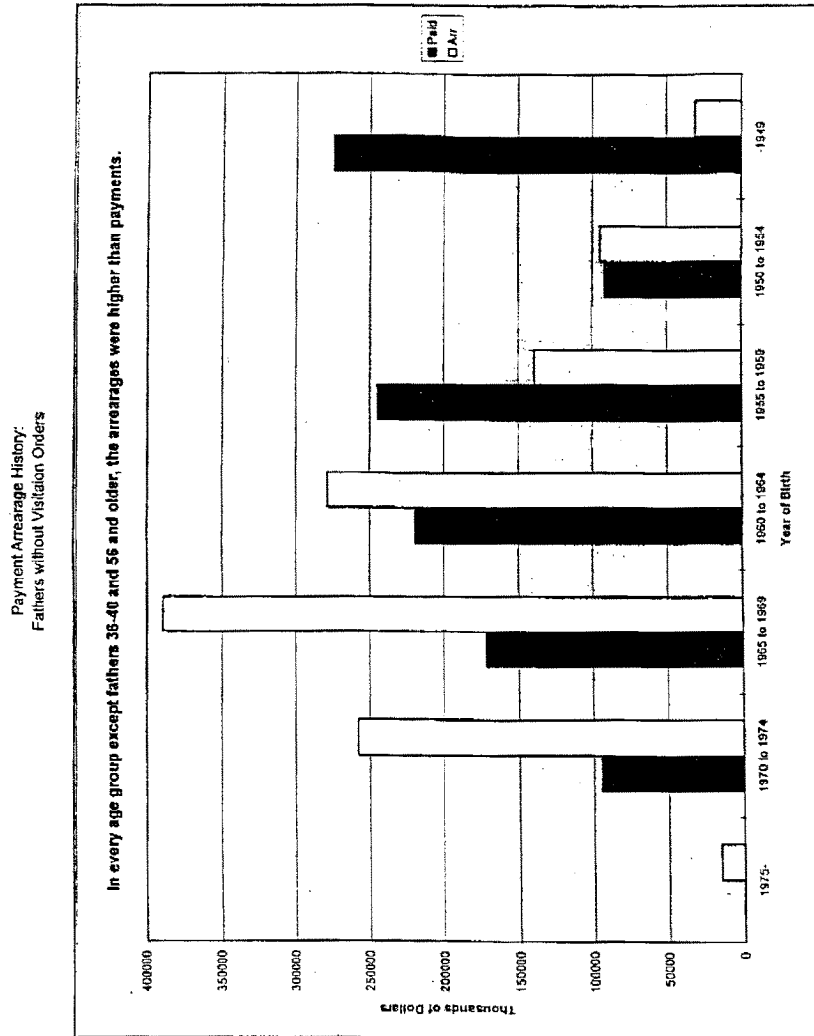
In the last decade, we have seen an increase in the efforts of programs to assist fathers in becoming and remaining involved with their children. Work still must continue to negate the many barriers left-standing that prevent many fathers, especially low-income fathers from becoming vital components of their children's lives. From 1989 through 1998, I coordinated the Paternity Parenting Time Program through the Wayne County Friend of the Court, Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan, in Detroit. The intent was to provide non-custodial parents, mainly fathers with the opportunity to obtain parenting time through a court order. The thought was that if the fathers were granted parenting time and be able to have access with their children, the amount of child support paid by these fathers would also increase, or, at the least, remain stable. In 1996 an analysis was completed of over 600 of these cases: 300 cases of fathers with parenting time orders and 300 cases of fathers without parenting time orders and the interaction with child support payments. Based upon categories of ages, the fathers without parenting time orders were substantially lower amounts of support paid (graphs attached). Fathers that had orders for access to their children were willing and eager to provide financially for their children.

A major complaint from fathers is that the amount they are in arrearage also affects their seeing their children. Under the current federal law, if they accumulate arrearage for any reason, their child support arrearage cannot be adjusted, except from the date that the motion to modify is filed. While presenting fatherhood/parenting issues to incarcerated individuals recently, the men's primary concern was their child support was continuing to grow while they were locked up with no means to pay. These fathers wondered how they would be able to contribute to their children's well-being and financial security when they were already so deep in debt that they could not see their way out.

This Court is attempting to secure funding for a program that would allow the placement of satellite Court offices in the community, especially communities where the default rate on paternity cases sometimes reaches 60% or more. These fathers have not had any contact with the Court regarding acknowledging paternity, yet were adjudicated to be the father, have had a child support order entered against them and yet have not had any meaningful contact with the Friend of the Court to address these concerns. These fathers, many of whom are low-income or unemployed will boast an inordinate arrearage level; one from which they have little if any hope of ever escaping from. Only the Judges have the authority to use discretion in addressing these cases, however with the Bradley Amendment in effect, the Judges cannot offer any workable solution to these fathers.

Payment Arrearage History:  
Fathers with Visitation Orders





**Statement of John Smith, Research Analyst, Alliance for Non-Custodial Parents' Rights, Burbant, California**

FOCUS OF THE HEARING

This committee's stated focus is on (1) low-income fathers who have children outside of marriage and (2) helping low-income fathers improve economically and promote marriage.

This hearing on fatherhood reveals a major misunderstanding: it assumes fathers are the source of these problems. They are not. Child support policy, along with changing social mores, is the problem. Nothing can be done in the short-term to change societal norms, but child support policy can be fixed immediately.

Improving job prospects for low-income people—whether mothers or fathers, parents or non-parents—is a good idea. But with our current no-fault divorce laws and lucrative economic incentives encouraging divorce, a problem emerges: as low-income families become middle-class, they can expect to be divorced by women, not men. Women initiate divorce at a rate 3 times that of men. The more financially

independent the women are—either from their own earnings or from child and/or spousal support—the greater the chance of divorce. During economic boom times, divorce increases. During recessions, it decreases.

But what is the real goal for getting fathers employed—is it to better their life or is it to generate an income stream that the government will tap into to collect child support? If it is the latter, it will fail miserably. It is not uncommon to see wage garnishments of 50% of the noncustodial parents' gross wages. At these staggering levels, why work? He won't be bettering himself—he will be working more, incurring more expenses, paying more taxes, experiencing more aches and pains and having less free time—all for the benefit of someone that doesn't like him enough to live with or vice versa. But if the reason is to support his children, this too is a fallacy, as child support won't help his children (see "Myth: Child Support Lifts Children out of Poverty" below). He is expected to take responsibility repaying a loan that he had no say in getting (see "Welfare: Grant or Loan?" below). Rarely do people pay something for nothing.

Obviously, women should not (and cannot) be held back from their ambitions. Everyone needs to be rewarded for taking individual responsibility. The work ethic needs to be restored. Our laws discourage responsible behavior (see "Perverse Incentives of Child Support" below). Divorce is the only contract in America that rewards that person breaking it.<sup>1</sup> Child support is tax-free income with no accountability as to how it's spent. Visitation violations and false abuse allegations are not prosecuted.

Another problem is that being a full-time mother is not valued and respected in today's society. The feeling is that women should be establishing careers while leaving the raising of their children up to "professionals." Then we are shocked to learn that these professionals—whether it's a poor inner-city babysitter or a Louise Woodward-type nanny—are slapping, hitting and/or ignoring the very children they were hired to raise. The message society and the media gives is "you can have it all." This is the ultimate quantity over quality argument. It's greed. The reality is you cannot have it all, all at once, all the time. The media is the biggest culprit in this arena, not only perpetuating the myth that you can have it all, but leading us to believe that "everyone else is doing it, so why can't you?"

It is important to recognize two distinct groups affected by child support collections: welfare and non-welfare. Sanford Braver points out in his book "Divorced Dads: Shattering the Myths," that a big difference exists between divorced fathers and never-married fathers. Government policy is clearly delineated along the lines of welfare recipients (a.k.a. Title IV-D) and non-welfare recipients. This probably correlates well with Dr. Braver's married/never-married division. So if new government programs are lucky enough to "work," child support problems will shift from the welfare group to the non-welfare group. They will not be eliminated. The remainder of this paper will examine family issues that apply to all socioeconomic groups.

Child support hurts children.

How could this be? After all, kids need to be clothed, housed and fed and that takes money. And child support collects this money for kids—at least in theory. Child support, with its excessive awards and draconian punishments, only serves to force noncustodial parents into exile, irreparably harming the children. Child support allows single-parent households to flourish.

*Child support awards are excessive.*—Compare the average child support award against other government measures such as welfare, foster care, social security and the poverty level.

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<sup>1</sup> Gallagher, Maggie, "The Abolition of Marriage," Regnery Publishing Inc., 1996.



Average Child Support Award <sup>2</sup> .....	\$733/mo .....	noncustodial parent's portion only
Foster Care <sup>3</sup> .....	358/mo .....	
Welfare (Michigan) .....	87.80/mo <sup>1</sup> .....	\$439/mo for a mother + 2 kids
Welfare (San Diego) <sup>4</sup> .....	128.57/mo <sup>1</sup> .....	900/mo—mother + 4 kids (in- cludes food stamps)
Average welfare benefit per recipient <sup>5</sup> ..	131.90/mo .....	Feb 1997 TANF
1997 HHS Adult Poverty Guidelines <sup>6</sup> ....	657.50/mo .....	8,163 (1 Adult under 65)
1997 HHS Child Poverty Guidelines <sup>7</sup> ....	221/mo .....	10,815 (1 Adult under 65 with 1 child under 18)
Social Security Adult Disability Income <sup>8</sup>	470/mo .....	

<sup>1</sup> converted into "child equivalents" based on audit to child poverty ratio of 3:1.

<sup>2</sup> Palumbo, Greg, 1997 presentation to Oklahoma's Joint House and Senate Judiciary Committee.

<sup>3</sup> "The Fight Against Child Abuse," People Magazine, Dec. 15, 1997

<sup>4</sup> Market Place radio interview from KPBS San Diego, aired 2/11/98 on KCRW.

<sup>5</sup> AFDC/TANF Feb 1997 Flash Report

<sup>6</sup> Statistical Abstract, table 758.

<sup>7</sup> \$10,815—\$8,163 = \$2,652 annually.

<sup>8</sup> Hagen, Margaret, "Whores of the Court," 1997, p. 274.

Even radical feminist and author Karen Winner confirms that child support is excessive when she writes, "There is accumulating evidence that men are challenging their wives for custody of the children precisely because it is cheaper to keep them than to pay child support.<sup>2</sup> Custodial parents often complain about how low support orders are, but when suggested that they give up custody and they pay child support, the screams are deafening. If support orders were equitable, this wouldn't happen.

*Child Support Punishments are Draconian.*—Congress has passed tougher and tougher legislation since child support's (Federal) inception in 1975—always hoping "this time it will work." It never has and it never will. The Constitution along with individual rights, have taken a beating in the process. Today, child support is the only debt that one can be jailed for (debtor's prison), you can lose your driver's license (or any license) even though your "crime" had nothing to do with a car, invasion of privacy is rampant through government sponsored databases such as the Federal Parent Locator System (FPLS) and the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH). HHS' FPLS tracks noncustodial parents' whereabouts and gives this information to custodial parents. However, if the custodial parent moves away with the children against court orders, such as Geraldine Jensen, founder of ACES did<sup>3,4</sup> (1) they are not prosecuted for kidnapping (or violating a court order) and (2) HHS will not give the noncustodial parents information on their children's whereabouts. In other words, the FPLS is a one-way street. Administrative accountability is non-existent. Bureaucrats are free to ruin your life (e.g. false paternity assignments and incorrect reporting to credit bureaus), and they are legally absolved of any liability. It's open season on noncustodial parents.

The current session of Congress has more "get tough" legislation introduced by Henry Hyde and Lynn Woolsey in addition to Christopher Cox, less than a year after President Clinton signed The Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act of 1998 into law. Child support and penalties accrue during unemployment and incarceration (even if you are a POW<sup>5</sup> The state of Georgia is considering "work camps" for non-custodial parents.<sup>6</sup> Slavery is making a comeback.

*Myth: Child Support Helps Children.*—Aside from the fact that parents are forced into exile by our child support laws, no study has ever shown child support to help children. And how could it, since no accountability is required of custodial parents. Custodial parents can spend this tax-free gift on anything they want: booze, drugs, new clothes, a new car, vacations—maybe even on the children. Nobody knows how much of the money ever reaches the child. UCLA Professor William S. Comanor estimates that only \$1 in \$5 of child support actually is spent on the child.<sup>7</sup> Why not

<sup>2</sup> Winner, Karen, "Divorced From Justice," ReganBooks, 1996, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> "Gerri Stacks The Deck," Burch, D.C., The Paper—Toledo's Alternative Weekly, May 19, 1995. Also at [www.ancpr.org/gerri.htm](http://www.ancpr.org/gerri.htm)

<sup>4</sup> See Jensen's appeals case 1981 WL 5460 (Ohio App. 6 Dist.) Also at [www.ancpr.org/jensen.htm](http://www.ancpr.org/jensen.htm)

<sup>5</sup> "Child-support-law amendment comes to attention of Hill," The Washington Times, April 27, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> "County eyes work-release facility for 'deadbeat dads,'" Richard Raeke, Walton County Tribune, March 14, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> "Child Support Feels Different on Male Side," William S. Comanor, Los Angeles Times, Feb. 22, 1999.

adopt the same documentation rules for custodial parents that the IRS requires for tax deductions? Ditto for penalties and fines.

Studies do show that states highest in child support and welfare payments rank lowest in child well-being (in fact, this information was presented to this very same committee in 1995).<sup>8</sup> Why? Money is a destabilizer or put differently, a single-parent household enabler. What was responsible for increasing child well-being? The intact family, something not terribly popular with society's "me, me, me" attitude. Divorces increase during economic boom times and decrease during tough times. Child support, like welfare, creates an individual economic boom (without requiring work, no less).

*Perverse Incentives of Child Support.*—Child support not only encourages irresponsible behavior, but demands it. Consider the case of the responsible noncustodial parent who works a second job to make up for the severe economic loss child support payments have created. He's doing what we would consider to be the responsible thing to do: improving himself, supporting his current family. The work ethic. He will have higher expenses, pay more taxes and have less time for himself and his family. But when the custodial parent hears of his second job, she files a petition for upward modification of child support based on his new increased income. The judge will grant this increase, as it is law. Net effect: the more responsible you are, the more child support punishes you. Why not cut back on your hours; even work less than full time? Enjoy yourself. Plus, you could use this as a form of revenge. The custodial parent has had all of her expenses paid for by the taxpayer (prosecution, attorneys, court fees, admin services). The noncustodial parent is forced to hire an attorney, file court papers and miss work—all direct expenses that he must pay. If he fails to do this, he will lose on default judgment.

*Welfare: Grant or Loan?*—Welfare is treated as a grant. The mother applies for welfare and gets it. The father has no say in the matter. If it were a loan, there would be principal, interest, late payment penalties and a length of the loan. For the mother, it is a grant—there is no intention of it ever being repaid, by her. But for the father, welfare that the mother applied for and received—often without his knowledge or consent—has now become a loan, complete with interest, penalties, even jail. For low-income fathers, it may be a moot point, as many do not earn enough to repay it.

For non-welfare fathers, why would anyone repay a loan that they had no say in obtaining? Granting welfare to one party and asking a non-participating party to repay this is the ultimate in irresponsibility. If a mother must go on welfare, the father should be offered custody of the children. If he assumes custody, then the mother would work (consistent with welfare to work policy) and pay the father child support.

Remember, collecting child support in welfare cases produces no benefit to the mother or children. All money goes back to the government. Please do not use the excuse that child support will lift children out of poverty.

An underlying problem with child support is that awards (1) do not reflect the dynamic nature of the economy and (2) are not necessarily based on earnings. Child support is based on a percentage of income, but not a dynamic or current percentage. If the child support order is calculated during a high earning period (overtime or commissions), then the noncustodial parent is stuck with a high order. Likewise, if the parent becomes disabled or get laid off, child support ignores these facts. Why not make the percentage a true percentage? If your support order is 20% and you get laid off, 20% of \$0 = \$0.

Secondly, child support orders are often based on imputed wages—what the judge thinks you could or should be earning. Why not simply use reality? Disallow imputed earnings and base support on actual earnings. Imputed earnings, taken to extremes, becomes legalized indentured servitude—slavery. Another assault on the Constitution. The California Supreme Court has already greased the slipperiest of all the slippery slopes with its 1998 Moss decision.

*No-fault Divorce.*—As Children's Rights Council attorney Ron Henry says, marriage is the fastest and surest way out of poverty. Conversely, divorce (or splitting up if not married) is the fastest and surest way into poverty. On average, over 3,000 divorces occur each and every day. No-fault divorce must be eliminated. No-fault divorce may be the crown jewel of the "me, me, me" generation. Once you have a child, "me, me, me" should become "us, us, us" (referring to the family).

*Problem: Women Initiate Divorce 3 Times that of Men.*—Perhaps this subcommittee needs to open a new hearing on motherhood and divorce. Most Americans believe the out-dated myth that a man dumps his poor wife for some hot, young

<sup>8</sup>Testimony of Cynthia L. Ewing, Senior Policy Analyst, Children's Rights Council, Feb. 6, 1995.

babe. That's Hollywood. Reality is shockingly different: women overwhelmingly dump men.<sup>9</sup> Women breaking up families—not a politically popular notion, but a reality. And what punishment awaits those who break this (marriage) contract? Lucrative spousal and child support awards.

*Who Needs Marriage?*—Talk about equality; marriage is on par with being single. By making marriage equal to non-marriage, there are no benefits to getting married—so why do it? We've made marriage unnecessary. Unmarried couples can live together, open joint bank accounts, buy cars, even get spousal benefits assigned by their employer. What if you couldn't receive child support unless you were first married (and no-fault divorced was eliminated)?

*Myth: Child Support Lifts Children out of Poverty.*—Children in poverty are on (or eligible for) welfare. All child support collected in welfare cases goes back to the government, not to the family. If welfare hasn't lifted these children out of poverty, it is impossible for child support to do so. Furthermore, child support advocates conveniently ignore the fact that many families of noncustodial parents are driven into poverty by child support orders. If all the unemployed, single custodial mothers worked minimum wage jobs, an additional \$70B in household income would be available to children.<sup>10</sup>

*Fundamental Problem 1: The Greed Factor.*—Child support encourages greed. It boils down to the premise that (1) poverty is the cause of poor child well-being and (2) money solves this problem. Money has never solved any social problem. LBJ's war on poverty is a perfect example. After spending trillions of dollars, poverty is alive and well. Studies have also shown that children raised below the poverty level academically outperformed children living above the poverty level—the reason: they were living in an intact family.<sup>11</sup> As mentioned above, money is a single-parent household enabler, a destabilizer.

Current laws encourage custodial parents to get as much money as possible from the noncustodial parent. The Bureau of Family Support Operations in Los Angeles runs a public access TV program that urges custodial parents to ask for increases "because things change."<sup>12</sup> Nationally recognized child support advocate Leora Gershenzon of The National Center for Youth Law, commenting on the large increase in establishing paternity orders said, "Besides receiving child support, the children will benefit from access to the father's medical history, rights of inheritance and eligibility for the father's health insurance."<sup>13</sup> The ACLU states, ". . . it is essential to consider ways to obtain an award that is higher than the basic amount dictated by the guidelines."<sup>14</sup>

Greed is also encouraged within child support enforcement administration, as their funding is based on child support collected (or amount to be collected). If the goal is to increase child well-being, why not base performance incentives of these organizations on child well-being instead of money collected? The fact that child support collections has become a big business is another clue to its greediness. Lockheed-Martin, the world's largest defense contractor, states that child support collections is "the company's fastest-growing line of business."<sup>15</sup> In today's one-sided atmosphere of "anything goes," private collection companies have no qualms boasting about how they intrude on noncustodial parents' rights and why these parents shouldn't have any rights.<sup>16</sup>

*Fundamental Problem 2: The Revenge Factor.*—The concept of custody (or primary caretaker) is the perfect vehicle for revenge and is used everyday for just that. Why do we treat children like property? "She got the house, the car and the kids." We've all heard it. When children are treated like property (cold and callously), they act cold and callously and we get situations like Littleton, CO. We are reaping what we've sown. Our children are not suffering from too much parental involvement, they are suffering from a lack of it, as is all of society. When our children are not raised properly, everyone pays the price. Time is needed to instill values in children. When sole custody is awarded (sometimes under the name of joint custody), not only does the child lose contact with that parent, but the custodial parent is apt to suffer

<sup>9</sup>See Braver, Sanford, "Divorced Dads: Shattering the Myths," Tarcher/Putnam, 1998.

<sup>10</sup>"Bucking the Trend," A Coalition of Parent Support Whitepaper on California Law, Feb. 21, 1998.

<sup>11</sup>Testimony of Cynthia L. Ewing, Senior Policy Analyst, Children's Rights Council, Feb. 6, 1995.

<sup>12</sup>"Focus on the Family," LA District Attorney's Office, Bureau of Family Support Operations.

<sup>13</sup>"Unwed Dads Step Up for Legal Ties That Bind," Los Angeles Times, March 8, 1998.

<sup>14</sup>"The Rights of Women," ACLU, Southern Illinois University Press, 1993, p. 136.

<sup>15</sup>"COMPUTERS: Troubled Child Support Project Dies," Los Angeles Times, Nov. 21, 1997.

<sup>16</sup>Child Support Intervention, Inc., "Mothers Against Fathers in Arrears, No Bill of Rights," See [www.deadbeatparent.com](http://www.deadbeatparent.com)

from what Dr. Richard Warshak calls “overload”—trying to be a full-time parent while holding down a full-time job.<sup>17</sup> Depression, anger and hopelessness result.

While billions of dollars are spent annually to enforce child support, nothing is spent on enforcing visitation. Visitation violations are as common as clouds in the sky, yet they are not prosecuted. People like ACES’ founder Geraldine Jensen know they can break the law with no repercussions. HHS proudly announced that they have made \$10M in grants available to study access (visitation). How does this \$10M nation-wide figure compare to support enforcement? Los Angeles County alone spends \$120M each year (and now wants to raise this 6 fold to \$720M). Adding insult to injury, a Children’s Rights Council member in Toledo notes that many of these grants are going to battered women’s shelters and other distinctly anti-male, anti-father and anti-family groups<sup>18</sup>. Actions speak louder than words.

False allegations of abuse (spousal and/or child sexual) represent the largest social problem facing our nation. False abuse claims are frequently used during custody hearings. Because no trial is given and no evidence required, false abuse is the perfect vehicle to gain instant custody of your child. By the time your trial comes around, no judge will remove a child from the parent who issued the TRO (temporary restraining order). The party that lies, wins. What is needed is a strict physical evidence standard in all abuse cases. Period. Vigorous prosecution of people making false claims should follow. False abuse allegations should carry stiffer penalties than the abuse penalty itself, as the person is knowingly defrauding an innocent person.

#### *The solution*

*Having a Child is an 18-year Unbreakable Commitment.*—When a couple has a child, they have made an 18-year commitment—regardless of their marital status. Children have the right to be raised by both biological parents and the parents have a responsibility to raise their children. As a society, we need to demand accountability for their actions. If you don’t think you can stay with your partner for 18 years, you have no business having a child. “Move-aways” would be strictly prohibited unless otherwise agreed to in a written shared parenting plan.

*Child Support as a Last Resort.*—Make shared parenting a rebuttable presumption in all divorce and child support cases, when parents cannot reach a voluntary agreement. Shared parenting is based on a written plan (unlike joint custody) and requires both parents to spend equal time (unless otherwise agreed to) raising their children. Shared parenting focuses on physical time spent with children and most closely emulates the child’s environment prior to divorce. Since each parent is spending equal time and resources raising their children, the need for child support collections evaporates. Child support would only be collected in cases where one parent refuses to either (1) spend half their time raising their children or (2) follow and agreed upon parenting plan.

With child support eliminated, the greed factor is eliminated. Parents know they cannot continually go back to court and ask for more money (plus, free resources would not be available to them). With the concept of custody dissolved, the revenge factor disappears—there is nothing to fight over. If false allegations of abuse (that cannot be backed up with physical evidence) are made, watch out—you’re headed for jail. If you move away with your kids (of course, they are not your kids), you will be prosecuted for kidnapping, unless agreed to in your parenting plan.

With the greed and revenge factors eliminated, parents can now concentrate on what they should have been doing all along: getting on with their life.

*Possible Objections.*—The most likely argument against this is that restricting “move-aways” violates a person’s freedom of movement. Once a couple has children, their freedoms temporarily are overridden by the child’s need to have both parents and the parent’s responsibilities. If a parent wants to wander, then don’t have kids. It’s time to enforce responsible behavior and hold people accountable for their actions.

#### *Conclusions*

Continuous introduction of child support legislation and increasingly draconian punishments reflect the frustration of 24 years worth of failed policy. With each new failure, the same “get tough” mantra is repeated instead of looking for new, fair and permanent solutions. Personal responsibility is defined as zipping off a check once a month and only applies to noncustodial parents.

<sup>17</sup> Warshak, Richard A., “The Custody Revolution: The Father Factor and the Motherhood Mystique,” Poseidon Press, 1992.

<sup>18</sup> Young, Cathy, “Ceasefire!,” Chapter 5, Legislating the Gender War: The Politics of Domestic Abuse, Free Press, 1999.

Thinking that low-income fathers can be “fixed” has two major flaws. First, if the low-income group becomes middle-income, then child support problems will simply shift into this category and not be solved. Secondly, if low-income fathers are put to work simply so the government can take the money they earned and pay it to the mother—why work? In many cases, child support is 50% of a person’s gross pay. This explains why many quit after their employer informs them of a wage garnishment. Getting a new minimum wage job becomes an instant doubling of their pay.

While societal change is an unclear and long process, our laws can, and must, be changed now—switching their sole focus from money to increasing parental involvement. This means maximizing the involvement of both parents. Shared parenting is the mechanism to do this. The greed and revenge factors would be eliminated from family law. A strong message of the work ethic, personal responsibility and accountability is what these new laws must promote and reinforce. Kids need parents, not money.

#### CHILD SUPPORT: MYTHS & REALITIES

*Myth: Money (i.e. Child Support) Solves Problems (Of Kids Being Raised In Poverty, Poor Child Academics, Behavior Problem, Child Well-Being, etc.)*

- Reality #1: Since no accountability exists to ensure that child support is actually spent on the child, this claim cannot be substantiated. UCLA Prof. William S. Comanor has research showing that only 20% of child support is spent on children.
- Reality #2: Child support acts as a single-parent (read: broken home) enabler. Child support, like welfare, enables one parent to take the kids and move away from the other parent. This causes irreparable harm to children.
- Reality #3: Poverty is not the cause of poor child well-being, in fact, studies show just the opposite. An intact family was the key determinant for child well-being. States with the highest welfare and child support payments ranked lowest in child well-being. Why? That money was a single-parent household enabler, children were raised in non-intact homes. During economic booms, divorce increases; during tight times, divorces decreases.
- Reality #4: Trying to solve poverty by throwing money at it won’t work. We know that thanks to LBJ’s War on Poverty programs. Money has never solved a social problem.
- Reality #5: Parental (that’s both parents) involvement is what kids need. Matthew Eappen had two well-educated, prosperous parents—but lacked parental involvement, preferring to hire nanny Louise Woodward (a teenager no less) to raise their child.

*Myth: If All Uncollected Child Support Was Paid, It Would Save The Taxpayers A Bundle*

- Reality #1: A figure of \$34B–\$41B is commonly referred to as uncollected child support. The government and other sources indicate it is in the \$5B range. And how would they know it’s \$41B? No central repository of support orders exists that is accurate. It is a well-known fact that many duplicate support orders exist (which should never happen) and that erroneous bills are routinely sent out. Los Angeles County is a prime example of this.
- Reality #2: The medical, behavioral and academic problems created by children raised in single-parent households dwarfs the cost of welfare. These costs include not only police, jails, hospitals and courts, but the psychological costs of citizens living in fear.
- Reality #3: Child support orders are excessive by any measure. The average support order exceeds that of welfare, foster care, social security disability—you name it. As pointed out in a 1992 GAO study and later confirmed by ASU researcher Sanford Braver, most parents who don’t pay child support cannot afford to pay it.
- Reality #4: Mothers are free to get welfare. Until this program is changed to disallow this practice, the taxpayers will be funding single-parent households, which is the genesis of these problems.

*Myth: Child Support Will Lift Children Out Of Poverty*

- Reality #1: All child support collected in welfare cases goes to the government, not children. If welfare hasn’t “lifted kids out of poverty,” then child support surely can’t.
- Reality #2: Poverty is not the problem; Money is not the solution (see first myth above).

*Myth: Child Support Orders Are Fair*

- Reality #1: Many custodial parents complain that child support is too low. However, when asked to reverse the support order (i.e. give up custody and pay the exact same amount of child support to the other parent), the scream bloody murder.
- Reality #2: While over \$5B is spent annually on child support collections, nothing is spent on visitation enforcement. HHS boasts they have allocated \$10M in grants to study visitation and access—that amounts to less than 0.2% of the budget.
- Reality #3: The government gives custodial parents information on the whereabouts of noncustodial parents through the Federal Parent Locator System (FPLS). But when custodial parents kidnap or move the children, HHS will not give noncustodial parents information on where the children are living.
- Reality #4: Welfare: grant or loan? The mother initiates this process, receives all the benefits and is not expected to repay the government one cent. The father, on the other hand, usually doesn't know the mother has applied for welfare, has no say so in the matter and is expected to repay welfare plus penalties and interest!
- Reality #5: Making false allegations of abuse is a well-known and well-practiced tactic in family law. False allegations are not prosecuted, physical evidence is not required (hearsay will do) and no trial is given. In short, you're guilty until proven innocent and you are denied your due process of law.
- Reality #6: Even radical feminist Karen Winner states in her book, *Divorced From Justice*, that child support is excessive—clearly exceeding the amount necessary to raise a child. (p. 52).

*Myth: Paying Child Support Shows Responsibility*

- Reality #1: Raising a child takes a lot more work than simply zipping off a check once a month. To equate writing a check with raising a child is ludicrous.
- Reality #2: Most people would not consider an able-bodied person who parks in handicapped spots a responsible person as long as he paid the fine. Why do we think this way when it comes to child support?

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**Statement of Bill Harrington, President, American Fathers Alliance**

INTRODUCTION

America is in the midst of a continuing family policy crisis. While policymakers search for answers after years of family decline in America and after years of both Congressional and State legislating on welfare and several issues relating to women and children; America is just now looking toward FATHERHOOD for answers. The American Fathers Alliance supports the work of the House Human Resources Subcommittee in holding this hearing and we look forward to the valuable information various researchers may provide on the value of involved fatherhood and strategies for reversing our decline of positive father parenting in America. What we look for most, is the realization that fathers are parents too, and that America's history of marginalizing positive father parenting has been to the detriment of not only fathers and family life in America, but the greatest detriment has been to the children of America. We urge Committee members, and all interested people, in reading the attached document; *The daddy bond: The earlier a man starts to care for his baby, the better*. This detailed two page article by Richard Laliberte appeared in *Parents* magazine, November of 1995. By detailing the critical value of father parenting in the first six months of life, we ask one question, where is the public policy, law or procedure, anywhere in our welfare system or legal system in any state, especially for unwed fathers, designed to meet this critical aspect of positive child development? Our failure to have answers to this question makes it clear that America's fatherhood crisis is deep and vary pervasive. Further, we must look to the equally pervasive common child residential schedule of EVERY OTHER WEEKEND with the other parent approved by our legal system in most cases. Even though not one recognized mental health professional or reputable author on the subject of parents or parenting, recommends that in most cases, EVERY OTHER WEEKEND meets the needs of a predictable majority of children, this pattern of limited parental involvement by fathers, amounts to a scheme of institutionalized child abuse. This is an outcome in over 60% of all cases of separated parents with court ordered Parenting Plans/Child Custody Orders. This is where the debate over social support and funding for programs for divorced and unwed fathers begins, because it is only with the understanding that what most fathers want most of all is one thing—to be able

to see and parent their children—without undue hassle from the mothers and undue interference by government officials.

The American Fathers Alliance joins with many father organizations from all over America, and other supporting organizations and individuals, in wishing for the success of these hearings and the open doors to funding of fatherhood programs that are so critically needed.

#### FIRST THINGS FIRST

To its credit, in 1996 Congress and President Clinton through the Personal Responsibility Act, enacted a special program entitled: *Non-Residential Parents Access Grant Program*. Congress appropriated \$10,000,000 in federal funding to start this program. All 54 jurisdictions have develop programs and applied for funding, both the public and private sectors. This was the first and very honest recognition that non-residential parents, somewhere between 85 and 90% of whom are fathers, were in need of federal programs and financial assistance to enable them to be more involved with their children and better parents. In effect for years, we had a national tolerance program for parental kidnapping of children. Father/child relationships had no recognized value and violations of court orders concerning father/child relationships are still routinely ignored. Fathers are an unrecognized national victim of systematic and routine violations of civil rights—the fundamental right to be a parent. When the White House Welfare Reform Task Force submitted its proposal to the president for his final consideration, the collective task Force recommendation was for an appropriation of \$200,000,000 per year for the Access Grant Program. The American Fathers Alliance calls upon Congress to fully fund the one existing fatherhood program in the amount of \$200,000,000 per year as a first gesture of serious attention to the needs of all fathers at the start of the 21st Century. If we are to invest in the future of our children, that investment must start here.

#### UNWED FATHERS

The most critical issue for never-married fathers is establishment of the parent/child relationship. Even though Congress has enacted wide sweeping paternity establishment goals to the several States, Congress failed to create programs to assist unwed fathers in delicate social situations from enacting the critical parent/child parenting relationships. Research has shown that if unwed fathers physically hold their newborn child in their hands within the first 24 hours of life, these fathers are 50% more likely to stay involved in the life of their child. Congress should create such a program for fathers at hospitals and birthing clinics, and fund the program sufficiently. When enacted and properly funded, this success would greatly reduce our difficulties enacting realistic child support orders, WITHOUT FABRICATED ARREARAGES, and instead create voluntary paying fathers in more cases of children born to unwed parents. The key issue missing from existing policy is the dignity of the infant/father relationship. Again, as stated in the attached research from Parents magazine, we see the value of an involved father in the first six months of life. This tangible investment of an involved father is the best early child development program. An involved father is the cheapest investment the federal government can make in the lives of these children. AGAIN, A FATHER IS THE REPLACEMENT FOR GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS, BUT GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS ARE NOT A REPLACEMENT FOR FATHERS!!!

Secondly, for unwed fathers, is needed a program to determine the best living environment for the child prior to entry of any court order. Congress should enact a national Friend of the Court program, modeled after Wayne County in Michigan. This program acts quickly when either parent first contacts the government for services. The parents are asked to immediately come in for parenting interviews, and a professional does a parenting assessment, and renders a recommendation to a Judicial officer. In this current program, a slight majority of parents recommended for child placement, as in the best interest of the child, are FATHERS. This program of fairness for children born in sensitive and delicate situations, should be modeled and expanded to other critical urban areas.

Further, this Wayne County program in Detroit reflects the second level of the best interest of the child, THE BACON TRAIL. Once we have determined, initially, the best interest of the child, we can look at stability and employment, and childcare services, WITHOUT the necessity of government funding. Most fathers are willing and wanting to work. With a child in their home to care for, and with the dignity of being a fully engaged and responsible parent, the father is more likely to raise the child without needed public services for either the father or the child. We know from federal welfare reform the easy cases are now off the welfare rolls, and we are left with the longer term, more difficult family situations. Research shows that by

the end of the second year after the birth of the child, the average father is earning at or around \$15,000.00. This puts the father/child relationship just above the federal poverty level, and moves the child out of a dependency lifestyle. In comparison with their mothers, the child would remain in a dependency lifestyle for several years, living through public subsidies of various forms funded through a variety of federal programs. THE BACON TRAIL, the home with the bacon and a strong work ethic, is most often the proven better home for the child. Congress needs to fund programs where fathers can have contact and get assistance in providing and protecting their young children, and where residential placement with the father, is in the best interest of the child.

Additionally, The American Fathers Alliance, Statement for the Record, at the March, 1999 hearing on Childcare, provided another father-friendly strategy for positive father-child relationships and reduces federal expenditures. Having a Father as First-Choice childcare policy, we can use limited federal resources for the truly needy cases, where there is no father available for childcare.

#### FRAGILE FATHERS—FRAGILE FAMILIES

The American Fathers Alliance fully recognizes the dysfunctional childhood many fathers experienced, and further, that a number of fathers have fallen victim to life's many compromises and find themselves in economic chaos and a significant number involved with substance abuse of one kind or another. Fatherhood programs are needed to assist these fathers in re-gaining their personal and parental equilibrium so they can function as responsible citizens, and most important, function as male parents. Congress would do well to provide funding for a variety of programs to assist male parents who really want help and are willing to work within guidelines until they can operate on their own and secure living wage employment. This is one area where Child Support policies need to be flexible to avoid unjustifiable increasing ARREARAGES, and unrealistic orders when the fathers are not working for pay, but rather are working on their personal character so that they may once again function as male parents without any social support. Rather than making permanent criminals out of these imperfect parents, Congress can create programs that will offer America's greatest gift: A SECOND CHANCE.

#### DIVORCED FATHERS

Most divorced fathers are in need of a single national program—a program for FAIRNESS. Unjustified anti-father bias is rampant in our legal system in all states as well as in all social service programs. Congress could meet a minimum need of all fathers by funding serious educational programs on the extensive value of positive father parenting and FATHER-LOVE. Judges and other courthouse professionals involved in working with separated family members, need to understand the significant negative impact of orders that unreasonably work to deny the formation and/or maintenance of father/child relationships. Congress should fund research to determine the number or percentage of children of divorce, who experienced unreasonable and unjustified limited contact with their fathers, and who later engaged in anti-social behavior and/or criminal contact. If we want to assess the social cost of fatherless children, we need to look at this crucial area. The answers are there and they are not pretty, but if we are to maintain this national standard of discrimination against fathers and children, we need to at least understand the consequences of this conduct. If America wishes a more gender-neutral program of deciding divorce outcomes, an extensive Judicial educational program on fatherhood needs to be funded. The report of the United States Commission on Child and Family Welfare: Parenting Our Children—In The Best Interest of the Nation, 10-96, should be reviewed for its many positive parent recommendations. The Minority Report's of Commissioners John Guidubaldi and Bill Harrington should be reviewed for more specific recommendations directed at fathers and fatherhood.

Divorced fathers cover the spectrum of all income levels. For significant numbers of what were middle class fathers at the time of separation, once these fathers are assessed significant child support orders, orders for maintenance/alimony, and temporary attorney fees, significant numbers of these middle class fathers actually meet the low income or poverty levels needed to qualify for program assistance. These fathers deserve federal funding for non-profit programs to assist fathers in all areas of family law, including calculation of child support.

#### CONCLUSION

Children NEED fathers. Fathers ARE parents. If we are to see dramatic change in the lives of our children then government needs to pay attention to these two



simple statements and apply them to any programs and legislative solutions they consider when dealing with families. We cannot continue to treat fathers as pay-checks and visitors in the lives of their children and expect children to grow into wholesome adults. Fathers need to be treated AS parents and recognized for the valuable contributions that they endow upon their children. For those less educated, programs should be developed that help educate the needy. It is not financial need that should drive legislative action for families, but rather, educational need that will bring us out of the darkness which lies before us. Until we resolve to treat fathers as parents and children as beings in need of their fathers, we can only expect the worst from future generations.

*What We Must Do.*—Congress should approve father-friendly legislation under the Fathers Count Act of 1998. This legislation should make positive father parenting a national priority. Congress should approve substantial funding—at least \$2 Billion for nationwide and targeted fatherhood programs. A public relations campaign should be launched to make the word “FATHER” a positive term in American discourse and a greater reality in every day family life. An inventory should be taken of federal laws, policies and programs that serve to discourage father involvement, and a campaign launched to repeal these provisions and substitute father-friendly sections. Congress should encourage the National Governors Association to survey state laws, policies and procedures for language that serve to discourage father involvement, and undertake efforts to repeal these provisions and substitute father friendly provisions. The term “DEADBEAT” should be outlawed and classified as a hate term in criminal statutes, and become actionable when used against individual parents by public officials and social service bureaucrats.

The 21st Century should begin with an equal call to parenthood and greater involvement in the lives of children by loving and caring fathers as well as mothers. The federal government should become father-friendly by moving to prioritize parenting matters equally for mothers as well as fathers and de-emphasizing financial outcomes as now our highest priority for children.

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**Statement of Stuart A. Miller, Senior Legislative Analyst, American Fathers Coalition**

Madam Chair and Honorable Members: The American Fathers Coalition applauds Chairwoman Nancy Johnson and the rest of the esteemed members of this Committee for the efforts they are making to find ways to more meaningfully include fathers in children’s lives.

This proposal is a step in the right direction and we support this initiative. However, we don’t feel that this proposal goes quite far enough. Our primary concern is that this proposal seems to do little to nothing for divorced fathers, whom we proffer face similar, if not greater obstacles, to involvement in their children’s lives as do the targets of this initiative.

The detrimental and well documented consequences of father absence are not limited to children from socially or economically disadvantaged families. Children from all walks of life are suffering the consequences of father absence. Those same children, like all children . . . love, want and need fathers involved in their day-to-day lives. Obviously we are talking about the super-majority of fathers, the 99.9% of fathers that are not a threat to their children . . . fathers who could be involved in their children’s lives, but for one reason or another, are not.

There is no greater crisis facing America today that the degradation of the two-parent, married, intact family. We need to do everything we can to restore and prop up that most preferred living arrangement for children. However, when that living arrangement breaks down, we need to do everything we can to try to ensure that children are allowed to have the maximum involvement of both parents in their lives. In particular, we need to provide a support structure for all fathers. We need to enable and encourage them to be there for there children. When you have a weak link in a chain, you support the weak link. It makes no sense to put so much strain on that link that you practically ensure that it will break. AFC suggests that this is exactly what have done . . . encouraged the link to break . . . and we have allowed it to remain broken.

Congress has taken a very active role in trying to ensure that children’s needs are met. But, with regard to parents, those efforts have been primarily focused on the financial needs of children. Until now, the arguably more important needs of children . . . the physical, emotional and psychological needs have received far less attention than they deserve.

Some detractors to father involvement suggest that this is an area that is best left up to the states. And it may be. However, the same rationale that prompted Congress to get involved in the financial support of children would also clearly justify Congress' involvement in these other areas, too. As a matter of fact, pursuing efforts to maximize father involvement in children's lives may be the most productive and most cost effective means of financial child support collection. Census Bureau Statistics, based on mother-only reporting and a host of reputable studies show a direct correlation between father involvement and financial child support compliance. Where fathers have joint-custody 90.2% pay all of their support on time and in full. Where fathers have visitation, almost 80% (79.1%) pay all of their support on time and in full.

With the vast majority of child support cases being non-TANF cases, Congress should allow divorced dads to participate in Congressional fatherhood initiatives, too.

Thank you.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES—WOMEN MAY BE INHIBITING GREATER FATHER INVOLVEMENT

With dual-income families now the norm, why are many women still carrying the majority of the responsibility for housework and child-care? Is it because of the "lazy husband" who only wants to watch TV when he returns home, or the "macho man" whose responsibility it is to take out the garbage, not change a diaper? While fingers have pointed at men, new research looks at the other side—how women may inhibit the collaborative efforts they are requesting.

The current issue of the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* includes the first study to define and empirically document "maternal gatekeeping." The study explores how women's beliefs and behaviors may actually be one of the potential factors inhibiting a collaborative effort between men and women in housework and child-care. The article is based on a sample of 622 dual-earner mothers.

"While many mothers in the work force feel they need more support in family work, most don't even realize their actions may be placing obstacles in the way. They, themselves, may be limiting the amount of their husband's involvement," said Sarah Allen, author of the study and recent Brigham Young University graduate student.

Maternal gatekeeping is defined as having three dimensions including the following:

- (1) Mother's reluctance to relinquish responsibility for family matters by setting rigid standards;
- (2) the need for external validation of one's mothering identity; and
- (3) traditional conceptions of family roles.

Included in these dimensions is the various ways wives manage, exclude or choose their husband's levels and types of paternal participation in family work. According to the study, 20 to 25 percent of dual-earner wives may be classified as "gatekeepers." It is also interesting to note that the conceptualized dimensions of maternal gatekeeping tend to be a "package deal"; mothers higher in one dimension, were generally higher in the other two as well.

#### *Standards and Responsibilities*

Some women discourage their husband's involvement by redoing tasks, criticizing, creating unbending standards or demeaning his efforts to protect authority in the home. This is most evident when wives act as household managers by organizing, delegating, planning, scheduling and overseeing the work done by husbands in order to maintain responsibility for the day-to-day aspects of family work. Their husbands, then, act as helpers by doing what is requested. But, this pattern may also encourage fathers to wait until they are asked to help and to request explicit directions.

#### *Maternal Identity Confirmation*

Rather than issues of control and management, in this dimension of gatekeeping, it is common for a woman's self-identity to be tied to how well she thinks others view her homemaking and nurturing skills. Because of this belief, she is more likely to resist her husband's involvement, as it would diminish her value.

#### *Differentiated Family Roles*

Differentiated family roles refer to roles for mothers and fathers that reflect a clear division of labor and distinct spheres of influence. Here, a mother who thinks family work is primarily for women may be hesitant to encourage paternal involvement and increase the likelihood she will monitor her husband's involvement.

As stated in the study, some women both cherish and resent being the primary care-giver, feel both relieved and displaced with paternal involvement, are both intentional and hesitant about negotiations for more collaborative sharing, and feel guilty and liberated with more involvement from men in family work. This ambivalence about increased paternal involvement serves to keep the gate to the domestic garden periodically swinging open and closed with gusts of wind invisible to fathers.

"This is a very complex subject filled with a variety of gender issues," said Alan Hawkins, second author of the study and director of the BYU Family Studies Center. "While the term has been loosely used in the field, no one has previously investigated its many dimensions or adequately defined it. With more attention to these issues, perhaps more mothers will be able to achieve greater collaboration with their partners."

The maternal gatekeeping study was conducted and written by Sarah M. Allen and Alan J. Hawkins, research associates of the BYU Family Studies Center. Alan is one of the few graduate students to have her master's thesis published in the premier journal in the field.

BYU Family Studies Center The Brigham Young University Family Studies Center is dedicated to conducting quality family research and providing valuable information to families that will enhance their lives. The Center has the largest concentration of family research faculty in the nation and is eager to become a valuable resource for family related issues.

#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore contact fathers' involvement in their children's schooling. Twenty fathers were interviewed and data analysis sought to describe and interpret common patterns and themes. Four key findings emerged from the study:

- (a) all fathers who participated expressed a strong desire for school involvement, and believed they had a responsibility to be involved;
- (b) the majority of fathers were not currently involved;
- (c) the majority of fathers reported that they were prevented from or obstructed in their efforts to become involved;
- (d) fathers reported that the loss of their children was the major consequence of separation and divorce and that this sense of loss extended to loss of involvement in their children's schooling.

The findings from this study will be of relevance to practitioners and policy makers in law, education, and mental health in developing policies consistent with changes to Commonwealth Family Law.

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#### **Statement of Cory J. Jensen, Legislative Assistant, Men's Health Network**

The Men's Health Network welcomes the opportunity to submit testimony on the issue of fatherhood. The Human Resources Subcommittee as well as the current Administration should be applauded for recognizing fathers as an integral part in their children's lives. As current fatherhood initiatives are being considered we must make efforts to reduce the barriers that keep fathers from becoming involved with their children. We at the Men's Health Network are concerned that any programs undertaken could be subject to fail due to problems caused by the Bradley Amendment.

Based on a brief survey which included responses from thirty-six states, fathers identified arrearages as a factor keeping them from becoming more involved with their children. Many of these arrearages accumulated due to illness, unemployment or underemployment. Such arrearages might be called "ghost arrearages," arrearages that would not exist if the child support order had been modified, based on the parent's actual income, to properly conform with the state's guidelines. These fathers want to be responsible and pay for their child support, but they simply do not have the means to pay. Once these fathers obtain a job that allows them to contribute to the upbringing of their children, they are already thousands of dollars in debt and financially ruined. The courts have recognized that child support often times needs to be modified in accordance with the father's ability to pay. Yet the court's ability to modify a child support order is hampered by the Bradley Amendment [PL 99-509 Subtitle B Sec. 9103].

## BRADLEY AMENDMENT IMPEDES PROGRESS

Federal law requires that a child support order be adjusted (or modified) at the request of either parent, to match the parent's ability to pay either more or less child support. However, the Bradley Amendment passed Congress in 1986 and states that a child support order cannot be modified retroactively under any circumstances, except to the date that a modification was filed and the other party was served. In many circumstances, fathers are not aware that they can file to have their child support changed if they become unemployed or are unable to work due to a medical condition or injury. During an extended hospital stay, arrearages can accumulate to incredible levels. Unfortunately the court cannot modify these arrearages to the initial point a father's earning level is no longer adequate vis-a-vis his child support payment.

Amending the Bradley Amendment to allow judicial discretion would be strongly advised. Judges can determine the difference between a father that cannot pay his child support due to a legitimate reason and the father that willfully chooses to not pay his child support.

## STATE LEGISLATORS ASK FOR RELIEF

Attached to this testimony are letters by state legislators which stress the problems that they have found in relation to the Bradley Amendment. For instance, the Oklahoma State Legislature has found the Bradley Amendment to be impeding on their ability to effectively pass their own laws.

- Jim R. Glover, Speaker Pro Tempore Emeritus, of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, wrote:

“ . . . the Bradley Amendment superceded legislation that was intended to allow finding and establishing of truth and being fair in paternity cases, specifically a marriage where a wife had an adulterous affair that resulted in a child being born that was not her husband's.

“ . . . similar situations . . . because of the Bradley Amendment. A temporary child support order cannot be retroactively modified after a paternity determination finds an accused man not to be the father of an out-of-wedlock birth. . . . where a parent was given their children to raise by the other parent, who never modified a child support order, only to be assessed the unpaid child support . . . at a later date. . . . citizens who have paid child support through a non-official process, where the parent is then forced to pay a second time. . . . other instances where an injured parent does not or cannot modify child support, who loses income, and then becomes recorded as another nonpayer with arrearages.

“Apparently the intention of this Federal Law is that it is more important to collect money from *anyone* as child support than allowing the truth to dictate what is fair.”

- Fellow State Representative Bill Graves also expressed his displeasure with the Bradley Amendment:

“I am hopeful that the Congress will repeal the Bradley Amendment involving child support matters . . . the Bradley Amendment is not only unconstitutional, it is unwise and unrealistic.

- Oklahoma State Senator and Family Law Attorney, James A. Williamson indicated his experience of how the Bradley Amendment adversely affects the modification of child support:

“In those cases, when a non-custodial parent has, by agreement, taken over physical custody and there is no formal change of the Court Order, the modification of the child support should be effective as of the date of the change of custody. The Bradley Amendment currently prohibits that effective date. I therefore respectfully suggest Federal Law be amended to allow for those circumstances.”

## CASE EXAMPLES

While the Bradley Amendment effectively ties the hands of state legislators, its largest impact is on the fathers and mothers that suffer unreasonable arrearages. These arrearages also have the effect of alienating the children from the parent saddled with such a large debt, discouraging marriage, and destroying 2nd families. Many of these fathers are candidates for the very fine fatherhood programs being contemplated by this committee or currently being implemented by the Administration.

Here is just a small sampling of the hundreds of responses received by the Men's Health Network.

Arizona.—After downsizing at a major international airline, a father was forced to either take a job in a new location outside of the state or to find a new job and stay near his daughter whom he has joint-custody of. He chose to stay in Arizona and seek new employment. A reduction in child support was denied, as it was determined that he left his job voluntarily to seek a lower wage job. Over a three year period, arrearages have accumulated to over \$10,000.

California.—A father is arrested for failure to pay child support and arrearages. Arrearages accrued due to father's inability to work after an automobile accident placed him in intensive care and subsequent nine-month recovery.

Connecticut.—A father accrued arrearages after he lost his job due to work-place restructuring. When seeking modification of child support order arrearages continued to accumulate due to court delays.

A father accrued arrearages after losing his job due to disability. Arrearages continue to accumulate at the level of his previous income, not at present level of disability payments.

Delaware.—Father on disability. His children received payments as a result of his disability. However, his child support was not modified and he was not credited for the children's share of his disability payments directly to their mother. As a result, he accrued unmanageable arrearages.

A father was laid off work at a refinery. Long term unemployment resulted in unmanageable arrearages.

Florida.—A father accrued arrearages after a hernia operation and subsequent inability to work.

A father accrued arrearages after child support order was not modified once he became the custodial parent.

A father placed on disability accrued arrearages.

Georgia.—Several cases of fathers who have lost their jobs and fallen so far behind on child support that they could not make up their arrearages.

A father accrued arrearages after he became disabled and was jailed after he was unable to pay.

Illinois.—A father injured from a serious auto accident is forced to find a less physically demanding and unfortunately, lower paying job and accrued arrearages that he could not pay.

Massachusetts.—A divorced father lost his \$72,000 a year job and was forced to move to California to find work in a related field at \$20,000 less a year. Mother moved with children to Pennsylvania. Father accrued \$83,000 in arrearages due to period of unemployment and long delays from conflicting court jurisdictions while trying to get the support order modified.

A father accrued \$10,000 in arrearages due to an accounting error at the department of revenue.

A father accrued arrearages because child support was assessed at the non-custodial level even once the children came to live with him.

Michigan.—A father accrued arrearages after the Friend of the Court based his child support payments on an income not in accordance with his actual income.

A father accrued arrearages while recuperating from back surgery.

Nevada.—A father lost his job due to company downsizing. After finding a job that paid less he filed for a reduction in child support, but accrued arrearages in lieu of a court decision.

New Jersey.—A father accrued arrearages due to court delays in assessing his child support order.

New York.—A disabled father accrued arrearages when the deductions from his disability check were not credited toward his child support payments. Additional arrearages were accumulated due to improper coordination between the courts in New York and New Jersey, where his children live with their mother.

A father accrued arrearages due to illness and unemployment. After becoming ill with hepatitis, he was laid off due to unavailability of sick leave.

North Carolina.—A disabled veteran had his child support order placed at the level of his "potential earnings" instead of at the current level of his disability payments. Unable to pay the monthly support order, which exceeded his monthly income level, he was considered in contempt of court and sent to jail.

Ohio.—A father accrued arrearages after being laid off. Additionally, child support order was based on child being placed in full time day care although the child is now older and attends school.

Pennsylvania.—A father accrued arrearages while unemployed yet child support order was maintained at a level in accordance with his previous income.

South Carolina.—A father accrued arrearages due to being laid off from job.

Tennessee.—A father accrued arrearages due to inability to work after a work-related accident.

Texas.—A mother accrued arrearages due to unemployment and health problems. A father lost his job when the company he worked for closed. He accrued arrearages during his long period of unemployment.

Virginia.—A father is held in contempt as he failed to pay his arrearages due to a broken collarbone and pending surgery.

A father accrued arrearages while unemployed even though he was the custodial parent.

#### CONCLUSION

While this is only a small sampling of cases, it demonstrates the problems inherent with the Bradley Amendment. Although these hearings do not specifically address the Bradley Amendment, we feel that members of Congress should know that the fine fatherhood initiatives being promoted by both the Administration and Congress cannot meet expectations as long as the men who participate in those programs are burdened with child support arrearages that are unreasonable and do not reflect their earning capacity during the period that the arrearages accrued.

Further, society's goal of encouraging marriage among this population is impeded when these fathers are burdened with "ghost arrearages," debt that would not exist were it not for the Bradley Amendment. Arrearages also hurt second families when this improper debt overcomes a struggling family's ability to cope with unemployment, illness, or injury. Courts need the flexibility to help create a family, but potential wives will be reluctant to marry a man, even if they have a child together, if it means that she is marrying an unmanageable debt.

To that goal, we are suggesting changes in the Bradley Amendment which will allow a court to modify an order retroactively unless the arrearage was accrued during a period when the person could have paid but willfully chose not to do so.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE OF OKLAHOMA  
*April 22, 1999*

Mr. Cory Jensen  
Men's Health Network  
P.O. Box 75973  
Washington, D.C. 20013

Re: Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Mr. Jensen:

In my tenure as an elected member of the Oklahoma State House of Representatives and now holding the position and title of Speaker Pro Tempore Emeritus, there have been numerous instances where Federal Law has superceded the ability of the people of the State of Oklahoma to determine what is best for Oklahomans. Nowhere has this been more apparent than when it comes to laws that impacts the family, family dissolution, or instances where families never form after an out-of-wedlock birth. I have seen numerous instances where members of state agencies such as the Department of Human Services and the Division of Child Support Enforcement have interfered with, or opposed good legislation because of possible conflict with Federal Law.

This year the Oklahoma House of Representatives passed unopposed a bill that would clarify paternity establishment and afford protection to a husband who knew a child born in marriage was not his. This bill was killed in Senate Committee after a letter was received from a Federal Child Support Enforcement Official from the Dallas Regional Office threatening to cut off Federal Funding for Social Programs in Oklahoma. It was later discovered that three words in the bill needed to be changed and these words were to clarify retroactive modification of child support because of the Bradley Amendment. The impact of this letter and the Bradley Amendment (P.L. 99-509, Subtitle B, Sec. 9103) superceded legislation that was intended to allow finding and establishing of truth and being fair in paternity cases, specifically a marriage where a wife had an adulterous affair that resulted in a child being born that was not her husband's. Apparently the intention of this Federal Law is that it is more important to collect money from anyone as child support than allowing the truth to dictate what is fair.

Apparently similar situations of being unable to correct an injustice can exist in many other instances because of the Bradley Amendment. A temporary child support order cannot be retroactively modified after a paternity determination finds an accused man not to be the father in an out-of-wedlock birth. I have heard plenty of instances where a parent was given their children to raise by the other parent, who never modified a child support order, only to be assessed the unpaid child support plus arrearages at a later date—effectively paying twice and to a parent who did not provide support. There have also been complaints from citizens who have paid child support, through a non-official process, where the parent is then forced to pay a second time. There are other instances where an injured parent does not or cannot modify child support, who loses income, and then becomes recorded as another non-payer with arrearages.

It is time to let the State of Oklahoma decide when it is appropriate to give judges discretion to retroactively modify child support so that it can be fair to all. It is time for Congress to give the State of Oklahoma the autonomy to determine what is in the best interest of the citizens of Oklahoma.

Sincerely yours,

JIM R. GLOVER  
*Speaker Pro Tempore Emeritus*  
*House District 65*

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
 STATE OF OKLAHOMA  
*April 22, A.D. 1999*

Mr. Cory Jensen  
 Men's Health Network  
 P.O. Box 75973  
 Washington, DC 20013

Ref: Committee on Ways and Means

I am hopeful that the Congress will repeal the Bradley Amendment (P.L. 99-509, Subtitle B, Sec. 9103) involving child support matters. First, under the Constitution, Congress has no powers in regard to domestic relations matters. Under Article 1, Sec. 8 of the Constitution, the Congress has only certain enumerated powers. James Madison, the so-called Father of the Constitution, said the Federal government had only certain enumerated powers and that all the rest were left to states. This is made clear by the 10th Amendment to the Constitution which provides: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the States respectively, or the people."

Thus, for Congress to legislate in the matters of child support or child custody, such as the Bradley Amendment does, is an unconstitutional use of powers. Congress should not interfere with the rights of the States to decide matters in this area through their own elected state legislators.

In addition to the foregoing, the Bradley Amendment creates problems in cases where a non-custodial parent has, by agreement, taken over physical custody of the child even though there is no formal change of court order. The Bradley Amendment prohibits a modification of child support in this circumstance being effective as of the date of the change of custody. Thus, the Bradley Amendment is not only unconstitutional, it is unwise and unrealistic.

Very truly yours,

BILL GRAVES  
*State Representative, Dist. 84*

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OKLAHOMA STATE SENATE  
*April 22, 1999*

Mr. Cory Jensen  
 Men's Health Network  
 P.O. Box 75973  
 Washington, DC 20013

Re: Committee on Ways and Means

I have been requested to submit a letter indicating my experience as a Family Law Attorney with the issue of modification of child support.

I have been in Family Law practice 23 years in Oklahoma and I have found that many times parties make post-decree agreements which are not reduced to a Court Order. In those cases, when a non-custodial parent has, by agreement, taken over physical custody and there is no formal change of the Court Order, the modification of the child support should be effective as of the date of the change of custody. The Bradley Amendment currently prohibits that effective date.

I therefore respectfully suggest Federal Law be amended to allow for those circumstances.

Sincerely,

JAMES A. WILLIAMSON

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**Statement of Richard "Casey" Hoffman, President, National Child Support Enforcement Association, and President, Child Support Enforcement, Austin, Texas**

Chairwoman Johnson, Representative Cardin, and distinguished members of this Subcommittee: I am writing to submit written comments of the National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) for the Subcommittee's April 27, 1999 Hearing on Fatherhood.

However, first I want to thank you for your long-standing commitment to issues that affect families—fathers, mothers, and children alike—and particularly for this Subcommittee's focus on improving aspects of the child support enforcement program. As you know, the National Child Support Enforcement Association is a national, non-profit organization over 50,000 professionals that, through education, training, and advocacy, works to ensure that children receive financial and emotional support from both parents—mothers and fathers alike. As you prepare to delve into the issues related to fatherhood in this country, and perhaps respond with new legislation, NCSEA would like to share with you our perspective and recommendations.

NCSEA RECOMMENDATIONS

NCSEA's statement today reflects our unique vantage on the intersection of programs that serve fathers and the state-federal child support enforcement program that serves families. NCSEA urges committee members to incorporate the following two recommendations into any forthcoming legislation related to fatherhood:

- Allow state Title IV-D child support enforcement programs to administer any congressionally authorized and appropriated funds to the states for the purpose of promoting responsible fatherhood to help young men become better fathers and providers; and
- Require fathers to establish paternity in order to be eligible to participate in any responsible fatherhood initiative.

*Background*

There is a growing recognition that responsible, loving fathers make a valuable contribution to the well-being of their children and to society. It is also clear that children who grow up without a responsible father in their lives are more likely to be poor, to drop out of high 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.

More than any other agency in state government, the child support program is in a position to reach out to fathers separated from their children—to provide benefits and to benefit from supporting responsible fatherhood initiatives. Fathers who are employed are better able to pay child support and support their children, as are fathers who have a positive involvement in the lives of their children.

*Child support agencies are already involved in forging relationships with fathers.* The national child support community has already begun to forge relationships with



community-based organizations providing services to fathers—often at the initiation of the community-based organizations that recognize the importance of establishing paternity and paying child support as a key element of responsible fatherhood.

In the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104–193), Congress recognized the important role the child support program plays in promoting responsible fatherhood by requiring states to establish paternity for 90% of the children born out of wedlock and by including the block grant for access and visitation programs in the child support title of the Act.

*Child support agencies' involvement will provide consistent, comprehensive message development.* Appropriating any block grant or other funds through the state child support agency will ensure that the message of responsible fatherhood is consistent and comprehensive, including the message that establishing paternity and providing financial and emotional support are critical to child well-being. Indeed, a father who fails to establish legal paternity has no legal standing under the law with respect to his child.

*Child support agencies provide a natural link to coordinate with TANF programs to develop self-sufficiency.* An effective responsible fatherhood initiative for low-income fathers should be coordinated with the state TANF agency, so that there is a comprehensive strategy to develop self-sufficiency for the family. The child support agency already has such a relationship with the TANF agency, including with computer data that links mothers and fathers.

*Child support agencies already require mothers to cooperate to receive services and are in an ideal position to instill such responsible decision-making in fathers as well.* Establishing paternity should be a condition of receiving services from a responsible fatherhood program. These programs are intended to provide assistance in getting a job or improving job skills, as well as to develop or enhance parenting skills. In return for receiving these services, the father should assume legal responsibility for his child through paternity establishment.

Moreover, Congress has already increased the cooperation requirements on mothers; they now are required to name the father of their children and to cooperate in establishing paternity for their children in order to receive government benefits such as cash assistance. If mothers fail to cooperate, they are subject to sanctions that range from a 25% reduction in benefits to no benefits at all for the family. Fathers should also be required in order to receive fatherhood services to enhance job and parenting skills.

*Child support agencies are already expected to increase fathers' role in families through welfare reform's new national goal of increasing paternity establishment.* Finally, as noted, Congress has set very ambitious standards for states to establish paternity in 90% of the cases of children born out of wedlock—in recognition of the importance of the role of fathers in their children's lives. Requiring the fathers to cooperate will help our country achieve this goal.

#### CONCLUSION

Child support enforcement agencies touch the lives of the families that need assistance the most from fatherhood programs and of the children who need their fathers. A united approach to family building will result in a better future for children. I urge members of this Subcommittee to seriously consider adopting NCSEA's recommendations if we are to fund coordinated, effective fatherhood programs.

Thank you for holding this important hearing on fatherhood and for the leadership that you and other Committee members provide on such critical family issues. Your work will have a lasting impact on those American children who live in single parent households.

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#### **Statement of Gregory J. Palumbo, Ph.D., Oklahomans For Families Alliance, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**

##### THE REMOVAL OF FATHERS FROM THE FAMILY

What is the status of families in Oklahoma? Oklahoma has one of the highest divorce rates in the nation, one of the highest rates for out-of-wedlock births, one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy, and one of the lowest rates of paternity establishment. The marriage rate in Oklahoma has plummeted since 1980 so that now Oklahoma has nearly equal numbers of marriages and divorces. The rapid decline of two-parent family structure in which to raise children in Oklahoma has coincided

with the passing of Federal Laws and Federal Agency policies, enacted by the State of Oklahoma, that provide incentives for broken families. Fathers have almost exclusively been the targets of these laws and policies with the true losers being the children.

Unfortunately, many of the behaviors that result in these negative social indicators for children are learned, and passed down from generation to generation as the welfare and entitlement philosophy and programs demonstrate. Oklahoma and the nation have promoted policies that devalue the importance of a two-parent family and make it easy for families to never form, hinder their formation, and make it far too easy to dissolve a marriage . . . especially when children are involved. What has in effect been done through policy and law is that one parent can do what is in the best interest of the parent, without accountability or having to take responsibility for choices, that ultimately put children at risk and in harms way. In almost every case, it is fathers who have been driven from their families or have never been allowed to enter, creating the next generation of fatherlessness and children at risk.

In the mid-1960's Daniel Patrick Moynihan predicted the outcome of driving fathers from families in order for mothers to qualify for welfare benefits . . . society would pay a price for fatherlessness with increased social problems. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan was right. The consequences of fatherlessness for children, for being raised in a broken home, are associated with dramatic increases in suicides, being homeless or runaway, exhibiting behavioral disorders, performing poorly in school, becoming a high school dropout, becoming teen mothers, and filling prison beds.

Legislation that affects the family is unequivocally the most important bills considered in the State and the Nation, and their enactment into law affects everyone—today, tomorrow, and for future generations to come. So why has this nation taken family structure made of two parents, a structure that worked for millennia, and in a short 40 years created incentives to destroy it?

There was a lesson to be learned from the welfare experiment that failed. In 1960 there was over 700,000 families receiving AFDC. And as more entitlement programs were added to the welfare package, the numbers of single parent families headed by mothers rose dramatically so that by 1994 there were over 5 million of these families, over a 700% increase in welfare families while the nations population hadn't doubled, with more than 15% of all families with children under 18 now receiving AFDC and numerous other entitlements. Generational welfare was occurring whereby a family on welfare produced the next generation of welfare recipients and non-welfare mothers were being recruited into the program. Fathers were excluded from these families by law, in order for mothers to qualify for welfare benefits, with the end result that children were being raised without the presence of a father or the stability of a two-parent family. We now have a need to teach young men how to be fathers as a consequence of this policy. Money and benefits paid to only one parent for having children, and excluding a parent that was almost always the father, were the incentives that caused the destruction of two parent families for the poor. We now repeat this process through cash incentives for divorce, but now we call it child support.

It is clear to see how laws of good intention were twisted due to money. As the number of welfare recipients increased, so did the budget, and so did the bureaucracy, and so do taxes. According to the Heritage Foundation, the total state and federal expenditures for welfare benefits exceeds 500 billion dollars. The cost to society for the criminal legal and prison industries costs another 500 billion dollars per year . . . incarcerating mainly children raised in fatherless homes. This does not include the 100s of billions in dollars in costs we must pay because of divorce or the subsequent problems associated with broken families. And as the family consisting of a father and mother and children disappears, the federal and state budgets continue to increase, as we need more programs to deal with the problems created by raising children in broken families.

There is a crisis in America because of out of wedlock-births and divorce. Nearly one third of all births today are out-of-wedlock, and over half of divorces today involve children under 18, with 50% of these occurring when the children are younger than 5 years of age. Approximately 1.5 million parents with children join or add to the ranks of families with children at risk every year—who are being raised absent one biologic parent—the father. Yet less than 10% of biologic fathers have primary physical custody of their children after divorce, separation, or because the children were born out-of-wedlock. Then, only one in 6 children see their father weekly after divorce or separation. And ten years after divorce or separation only 1 in 10 have weekly contact with their father, and 66% have no contact what so ever. When fathers are so important for the well being of their children, both financially and emotionally, why does Oklahoma and the nation continue to provide incentives to ex-

clude fathers from families and their children? Why have we replaced a failed welfare and entitlement policy with a private entitlement policy funded by fathers in the name of child support which was mandated by the Federal Government in laws passed since 1975? Money and jobs can be the only answer since the surest way to remove children from poverty is to raise them in an intact two parent family, and not raise them in a single parent family.

Our state laws and their treatment of fathers today are not much different than the laws that created the welfare problem, providing financial incentives to states, an industry, and one parent to drive fathers from families. You may ask why do we not have legislation in Oklahoma that promotes marriage and ensures children have two parents? Follow the money to see who benefits. There are cash incentives in the form of block grants from the federal government to the states for broken families. Broken families also provide jobs programs. In 1994, California received a net income to its general revenue fund of 108 million dollars in federal block grant dollars above its costs for child support enforcement. It made money from broken families. It also spent over 355 million dollars in child support enforcement . . . huge jobs program for the state. Oklahoma in contrast received 2.6 million dollars in net income to the state while spending 18.6 million dollars on child support enforcement. This cash flow for broken families will continue to increase dramatically as more states receive more dollars for broken families in the form of these federal block grant reimbursements. In 1998 there were over 60,000 employees in federal and state child support enforcement divisions while there were only a little over 100,000 IRS employees. And for all of these employees, the cost of this enforcement was over 1 billion dollars more than the money collected for families on welfare as reimbursement to the taxpayer for these expenses, which was the original purpose for establishing child support enforcement. The bottom line is that broken families are profitable to states and to too many groups including private business, and they provide clients for social programs and the criminal justice industry.

#### YOUNG MEN WANT TO BE FATHERS TO THEIR CHILDREN

In 1998 The Oklahoma Fatherhood Program of COPE, Inc. held fatherhood classes in the Oklahoma County Juvenile Detention Center as a pilot program. There was only sufficient time and space to enroll young teenage fathers while the program was offered. Almost every one of the young men enrolled in our classes came from a broken home absent their biologic father, and they were now fathers to children born out-of-wedlock. They were repeating the cycle of their childhood. Some of the mothers of their children already had new boyfriends (approximately 15–20%) driving some of the young fathers out of the lives of their children. Yet all of these young men in a few short weeks demonstrated they had a desire to be a father to their child(ren). Each went through parenting class, watched instructional videos, participated in discussions on fatherhood, etc. Every one of the participants in the class exhibited a real commitment to be a part of their child's life. The Fatherhood classes ended when the funds for the pilot program expired.

There are other examples that demonstrate men wish to be parents for their children. The voluntary paternity establishment program run by the Office of Child Support Enforcement and state agencies is one. Approximately 80% of men identified by the mothers as the father of their child show up in the hospital for the birth, even though paternity establishment through DNA testing will demonstrate many are not the biologic father. Then there are numerous fathers after divorce who spend thousands of dollars trying to enforce access and parenting time orders so that they can see their children. If fathers did not care about their children, fathers wouldn't try to remain involved in their child's life after divorce, and one would expect fathers to be the driving force behind divorce—yet mothers file the vast majority of divorces for no better reason than a bad hair day according to research by Dr. Sanford Braver. Then there are studies which indicate many mothers see no need for father involvement in rearing children, and further, that many mothers interfere with a father's access to his child(ren). Many of the problems fathers have had in being a parent to their children can be traced to Federal policies and laws that have rewarded states for broken families with a focus on money and child support. It is clear from the Congressional Record of the 1980's that it was not the intent of Congress to promote only the financial support of children by the legislation being considered, and that was made into law, but that emotional support for children should also receive priority. Unfortunately states and custodial parents do not receive money for the emotional support of children so there has been little legislative activity or enforcement in this area.

## FATHER CLEANSING THROUGH POLICY AND LAW

Federal and state laws that paid a mother to not marry the father of her children was bad public policy, yet now it is being expanded through privatization. In order to maximize the financial support of children and mothers, Federal Law superceded state laws for establishing child support obligations based on the needs of the children and circumstances of the parents. Again the Federal government has its fingerprints all over these destructive policies. First came the laws, and then consultants for the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Child Support Enforcement began promoting child support guidelines to states that went well beyond the cost of raising children. One of these consultants has a child support collection company under contract to many states where they collect on both ends . . . raising child support guidelines and collecting child support. What is clear from data collected by the Census and analyses performed by others is that child support doesn't remove children from poverty and it likely never can or will. Why? Because poor people have children with poor people . . . parents who are unskilled, have less or little education, or have other limitations. The best way to remove these children from poverty is to promote marriage and provide both parents with the skills and education that will allow them a better future and less need for government assistance.

Instead the nation has gone in an opposite direction . . . Federal law has subsequently mandated that fathers be defined as criminals upon failure to financially support their children regardless of circumstance. States have been more than willing to comply with Federal law by vilifying fathers and passing laws that punish fathers for failing to pay.

What types of fathers are we punishing with these harsh laws? We have laws in Oklahoma and elsewhere in the U.S. that make a husband financially responsible for any child born in marriage, even if the mother had an adulterous affair and left her husband prior to birth of the child. We allow a mother of a child to withhold informing the father that she had a child out-of-wedlock, and then years later come back for back child support regardless of the man's current circumstances—like a second family and children to support. There are states that apparently do not care who the father is for paternity as long as some man is called the father and a child support order is entered. And then there are fathers who willfully raise their children full time for years after a mother leaves them in their care, only to find years later that they did not modify a child support order so they can now pay back child support to the parent that abandoned the child. We allow states to force a person to work overtime or obtain additional employment in order to survive after having to pay oppressive child support, knowing full well that the primary beneficiaries of the policy are federal and state tax revenue coffers, then the child/mother, and then the person earning the money. Federal and State law penalizes fathers who lose a job by making them debtors due to child support, often with interest added to the debt, and possible imprisonment. There are mothers who are being forced to work because their husbands can't keep any of the extra income they earn due to child support and taxes, thus robbing children of their parent's time. There are fathers and their wives who are distraught because the father needs medical care that will prevent him from having income and paying child support for several weeks or more . . . making him a deadbeat and a debtor with a possible prison term. Many of these problems are due to one specific Federal law . . . the Bradley Amendment (P.L. 99-509, Subtitle B, Sec. 9103) that prevents retroactive modification of child support when warranted. Congress needs to modify this law so real circumstances can be taken into account when it comes to child support obligations, and let the states decide how best to do this.

Where are the studies examining how many fathers have been legally cutoff from their children and families, financially bankrupted by the child support policies and laws, who have lost careers or businesses by becoming entangled in this quagmire of flawed social policy and law, who have spent their retirement accounts trying to stay up to date on child support, that have had to give up seeing their children because the mother moved with the children or interferes with access, or who have been sent to county, state, or federal prison? Why is it that all we hear about is the dollars collected, the dollars owed, and the newest laws that will further vilify and punish fathers whiling growing federal and state government bureaucracies and industries that are parasites of the intact two-parent family and children? How have we so lost our way in a short 40 years?

## A SOLUTION TO FATHERLESSNESS

The federal financial incentives for broken families must end if we are to re-establish the intact two-parent family as the norm—an environment where for millennia

children and society have flourished. We must as a nation hold both parents of children truly accountable for financial and emotional child support, thus removing the financial incentive for one parent to divorce or never marry. We must change laws like the Family Support Act of 1988 that has served as a family destruction incentive act, a divorce industry and government bureaucracy growth and reward act by reinserting discretion, circumstances, and common sense when setting child support awards. We must modify the Bradley Amendment (P.L. 99-509, Subtitle B, Sec. 9103) that prevents retroactive modification of child support when warranted. Making a father into a debtor to the state or another parent due to child support will not solve the problem of children being raised in poverty, but will drive fathers from the life of their children. Congress needs to modify this law so real circumstances can be taken into account when it comes to child support obligations, and let the states decide how best to do this. We must begin to disassemble the federal and state bureaucracies that parastize families and promote their destruction using cash and other entitlements as the incentive, and redirect their efforts to education and promoting family formation. The damage done to men and fathers for 40 years must also be reversed. Men raised in fatherless homes and children experiencing it for the first time must be educated on the role of fathers in the family and in society. Women must be educated to the risks they expose their children to by having children out-of wedlock or after divorce. We as a nation must begin to reassemble two-parent family structure through public policy and law, by mainly removing the incentives for creating single-parent families.

It has only been in the last few years that Congress and the nation have begun to examine public social policies in regards to family and the role and importance of fathers. It is time for this Congress to act. As a first step in the reintegration of men and fathers into the family, Congress should pass the Fathers Count Act of 1998. Many young boys and men who have been raised absent a father have many of the social ills and characteristics associated with fatherlessness. These young men have many of the characteristics of long-term welfare dependants requiring assistance. These young boys and men need education, job skills, mental health and substance abuse treatment, family counseling involving the mothers of their children, transportation, etc. Most importantly these boys and young men need access to their children on a regular and continuing basis from birth onwards, so that they form the emotional bonds that are so important for the child's development and for themselves to remain involved in financially and emotionally supporting their children through life.

Congress should approve substantial funding for the *FATHERS COUNT ACT OF 1998* of at least \$2 billion for nationwide and targeted fatherhood programs. Public relations campaigns should be instituted to educate the public to the needs children have for two biologic parents, and the risk mothers and their children face by choosing single-parenthood, divorce, and a non-stable or non-traditional two-parent family lifestyle. The National Governor's Association should be urged by Congress to survey, examine, and identify state laws, policies, and procedures which discourage two-parent family formation and stability, or that criminalize fatherhood so that they may be rewritten or repealed. If this Congress takes steps now to recognize the importance of fathers in childhood development, then we as a nation can begin the 21st Century promoting the involvement of both mothers and fathers in rearing children in an intact two-parent family within marriage, and the benefits that their children will receive from this traditional family structure.

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#### **Statement of John R. Stoutimore, Attorney at Law**

1. At the time of John Rabon's divorce, Mrs. Rabon was given custody of the three children and Mr. Rabon was ordered to pay support by wage withholding.
2. Texas Child Protective Services subsequently placed the children with Mr. Rabon after determining that Mrs. Rabon had abused and neglected them.
3. In Texas, the Title IV-D agency is the Office of the Attorney General (OAG). Mr. Rabon requested the OAG's assistance in terminating his child support payments and obtaining support from Mrs. Rabon.
4. After confirming that the children lived with Mr. Rabon, the OAG wrote Mr. Rabon's employer and instructed the employer to cease child-support withholding.
5. The OAG did not file a motion to terminate Mr. Rabon's child support obligation. Consequently, Mr. Rabon's child support liability remained in effect.
6. Further, the OAG did not file suit to obtain child support payments from Mrs. Rabon.

7. Because Mr. Rabon's child support liability did not terminate when his employer ceased withholding, Mr. Rabon's 1998 income tax refund has been seized for "child support arrearage." The children remain with Mr. Rabon.

JOHN R. STOUTIMORE  
ATTORNEY AT LAW  
FORT WORTH, TEXAS  
*March 30, 1999*

Men's Health Network  
Attn: Ms. Tracie Snitker  
P.O. Box 75972  
Washington, DC 20013

Re: John Rabon

Dear Ms. Snitker:

In my family-law practice, I have met several child support obligors who have complained of (1) the OAG's wrongful seizure of income tax refunds to pay non-existent child-support arrearages; and (2) the OAG's refusal to seek modification of child support orders when the subject children have begun to reside with the obligor.

John Rabon's case is a prime example. At the time of the Rabons' divorce, Mrs. Rabon was given custody of the three Rabon children and Mr. Rabon was ordered to pay support via wage-withholding.

In February 1998, a Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworker determined that the children had been abused and neglected in their mother's care, and the children were sent to live with Mr. Rabon without court action. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Rabon requested the OAG's assistance in terminating his child support payments and obtaining support from Mrs. Rabon. The OAG asked Mr. Rabon to confirm his actual CPS-authorized custody of the children, so Mr. Rabon obtained a confirmation letter from the CPS caseworker. This 5/12/98 letter is attached as EXHIBIT A.

Based upon the CPS letter and other information provided to the OAG, the OAG wrote Mr. Rabon's employer on 6/1/98 and instructed the employer to cease withholding. This letter is attached as EXHIBIT B.

Now, by letter dated 3/5/99, the Department of the Treasury has notified Mr. Rabon that \$1,071.00 of his income tax refund for 1998 has been withheld because of a child support arrearage asserted by the OAG. This letter is attached as EXHIBIT C.

Mr. Rabon insists he had no notice whatever of any claimed arrearage and is now attempting to obtain a full return of the monies withheld. Too, he is considering filing a pro-se suit to terminate any technical arrearages as of the date the children began living with him, and to obtain support for the children from Mrs. Rabon. It appears to me that the OAG should file the case for him. Two issues present themselves:

1. First, when the OAG learned that the children were living with Mr. Rabon, why didn't it file a motion to terminate Mr. Rabon's child-support obligation and obtain support payments from Mrs. Rabon? The OAG knew that merely terminating the employer's withholding would not terminate Mr. Rabon's support liability, and it also knew that such letter would not obtain any support whatever from Mrs. Rabon.

2. Second, although the OAG letter obtained temporary relief for Mr. Rabon, such relief was short-lived given that the OAG subsequently seized his tax refund. The OAG could assert that Mr. Rabon was already in arrears when the OAG instructed the employer to stop withholding—but if that were the case, the OAG should not have stopped the withholding. Hence, we must conclude that the OAG seized Mr. Rabon's income-tax refund over a paper-arrearage that arose after the employer stopped withholding. In other words, the OAG letter caused the arrearage.

Having experienced the OAG's reluctance to perform its duties in cases such as this, I believe any effort to correct these errors through local OAG personnel will be met with hostility or, at best, inaction. Can you provide me with a contact person responsible for investigating the OAG's actions in this case and obtaining relief for Mr. Rabon and the Rabon children?

Please feel free to call or fax me at the above address. My e-mail address is STOUTIMORE@aol.com.

Very truly yours,

JOHN R. STOUTIMORE

[Exhibits A, B and C are being retained in the Committee files.]

