

MICHIGAN FAMILY FORUM
Sound Public Policy for Stronger Michigan Families

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Marriage Breakdown Costs Taxpayers at Least \$112 Billion a Year
First-Time Research Reveals Annual Taxpayer Costs for Divorce and Unwed Childbearing

Michigan Costs Are \$1.56 Billion per Year

WASHINGTON, D.C./LANSING, Mich. - In first-ever research, a new report quantifies a minimum \$112 billion annual taxpayer cost from high rates of divorce and unmarried childbearing. It identifies national, state and local costs which account for more than \$1 trillion in the last decade. This landmark scholarly study, entitled "The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing: First-Ever Estimates for the Nation and All 50 States," was released on April 15th at the National Press Club by four renown policy and research groups—Institute for American Values, Georgia Family Council, Institute for Marriage and Public Policy, and Families Northwest.

"This study documents for the first time, that divorce and unwed childbearing—besides being bad for children—are also costing taxpayers a ton of money," said David Blankenhorn, president of the Institute for American Values. "Even a small improvement in the health of marriage in America would result in enormous savings to taxpayers," he continued. "For example, a 1 percent reduction in rates of family fragmentation would save taxpayers \$1.1 billion."

Statewide figures for all 50 states are included in this national report. In Michigan, the percentage of female-headed households living in poverty is 56.6 percent of the 1.3 million total households in poverty. The study's authors estimate that marriage would lift 60 percent of them out of poverty. This means that total poverty in Michigan would be reduced by 34 percent. This could lead to an annual savings for Michigan of \$1.56 billion.

"Marriage is an intensely private personal relationship, but there is also a profound public dimension to this important institution," said Michigan Family Forum Executive Director Brad Snavely. "This report confirms what we've known for many years – that our state benefits greatly from strong, stable marriages and that we're all paying a high price for family fragmentation. Michigan recently faced a budgetary crisis and is likely to encounter ongoing deficits in the years ahead. This new research proves that supporting programs that strengthen marriage would assist in erasing these deficits."

"Prior research shows that marriage lifts single mothers out of poverty and therefore reduces the need for costly social benefits," said principal researcher Ben Scafidi, Ph.D., economics professor at Georgia College & State University. "This new report shows that public concern about the decline of marriage need not be based only on 'moral' concerns, but that reducing high taxpayer costs of family fragmentation is a legitimate concern of government, policymakers and legislators, as well as community reformers and faith communities."

“This report now provides the basis for a national consensus that strengthening marriage is a legitimate policy concern,” said Blankenhorn. “The report’s numbers represent an extremely cautious estimate, a lower-bound figure, and have been vetted by a group of distinguished scholars and economists who have attached their names as advisors to this report.”

More background information and full report at
http://www.americanvalues.org/html/coff_mediaadvisory.htm

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*Michigan Family Forum is a 501c3 non-profit organization that advocates on behalf of families and children. The group provides research and education for the legislature and the public and is a member of the Michigan Healthy Marriage Coalition. For more information or to download additional research on family issues, visit www.michiganfamily.org