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REVEALING THE TOLL OF THE GENDER DISADVANTAGE

NEW REPORT SHEDS LIGHT ON ILLINOIS POVERTY AND ITS DISTINCT IMPACT ON WOMEN AND GENDER MINORITIES

CHICAGO, March 13, 2019 – New findings released today confirm that poverty and inequity uniquely harm women and gender minorities. ***"The Gender Disadvantage: Why Inequity Persists"*** report argues that improving the well-being of women—particularly women of color—would deliver the greatest impact in the fight to reduce poverty and boost Illinois' economy.

This latest study from Heartland Alliance's Social IMPACT Research Center shows how gender, gender identity, and gender norms deepen poverty for women and gender minorities in Illinois—and how women who have other marginalized identities experience even more inequity.

"The Gender Disadvantage" demonstrated that, on many measures of economic opportunity, women fare worse than men. Women in Illinois earn only 78 cents for every dollar earned by men for full-time, year-round work, and this pay gap gets wider for women of color. **If we continue to do nothing, women in Illinois will not see equal pay until 2065.**¹ But if we do only one thing—**eliminate the gender wage gap—working women's poverty rates in Illinois would be more than halved.** That would translate into a 16 percent increase in women's earnings, totaling \$20.5 billion—a huge potential boost for Illinois's economy that would benefit 1.1 million children by reducing the poverty rate for children with working mothers by 43 percent.²

"Women are a driving force in our society and economy, and yet they continue to experience inequitable outcomes in the workplace, at home, and in their health and well-being. These inequities are amplified for women who face oppression based on other aspects of their identity," says Evelyn Diaz, President of Heartland Alliance. "In order to address the gender poverty and wealth gap, our solutions must also tackle inequities for people of color, immigrants, low-wage workers, LGBTQ people, and others."

Key findings include:

- **Women of color fare worse than white women on almost every domain:** they're paid less, have less wealth, are more likely to be low-wage workers in jobs, have poorer health outcomes, higher incarceration rates, experience domestic violence, and have worse economic outcomes when experiencing disability. In Illinois, black women have a poverty rate three times higher than their white counterparts.
- **Women experience high rates of wage inequities and wage violations,** and make up a larger percentage of the workforce in sectors that lack key benefits and make it difficult to balance caretaking and work. Though women have better education outcomes and lower unemployment rates than men, they are still more likely to live in poverty.

¹ Institute on Women's Policy Research. (2015). The status of women in Illinois, 2015: Highlights.

² Mili, J., Huang, Y., Hartman, H., & Hayes, J. (2017). The impact of equal pay on poverty and the economy. The Institute for Women's Research.

- **Single mothers are deeply and uniquely impacted by poverty.** They experience significant economic shocks after childbirth that linger throughout their lifetime, are pushed into poverty by child care costs, and are harshly penalized by the safety net.
- **Workplace discrimination and harassment are key drivers of economic gender inequities.** Women experience higher rates of discrimination and harassment on the job than men, and gender non-conforming people face higher rates of employment discrimination and harassment than cisgender people.
- **The unequal distribution of unpaid care seeds many other disparities.** Women spend significantly more time on unpaid care work than men, making it harder for women to engage in the labor force, pursue educational opportunities, or be more visible in public life.
- **Gender discrimination and disparity extends beyond the gender binary.** Gender minorities experience high rates of poverty, poor physical and mental health, workplace discrimination, violent victimization, sexual assault, homelessness, and trafficking. One in five trans Illinoisans live in poverty.

“This Women’s History Month, it’s important to celebrate the progress towards gender equity—women are excelling in the educational realm, are represented at historic rates in Congress, and Chicago is on the cusp of electing its first black woman mayor,” said Katie Buitrago, Director of Research at Heartland Alliance. “But, against that backdrop of progress, stark gender disparities persist. Women and gender minorities still fare worse than men on almost every indicator of well-being.”

In order to combat these disparities, “The Gender Disadvantage” calls for sweeping policy change, including:

- Addressing discrimination head on to increase opportunity and fairness
- Increasing income to foster economic security
- Increasing wealth-building opportunities
- Changing the structure of work to foster stability and success
- Recognizing and valuing the vital role of caregiving for families and the economy
- Ensuring health care access, meaningful coverage, and support

“The Gender Disadvantage” and related infographics are available for download at www.heartlandalliance.org/povertyreport All data images are to be credited to the Heartland Alliance Social IMPACT Research Center. Contact IMPACT for assistance accessing and interpreting local data.

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Heartland Alliance, one of the world’s leading anti-poverty organizations, works in communities in the U.S. and abroad to serve people experiencing homelessness, living in poverty, or seeking safety. The organization provides a comprehensive array of services in the areas of safety, health, housing, education, economic opportunity and justice, as well as leads state and national policy efforts to create systemic change.

Heartland Alliance’s Social IMPACT Research Center conducts research that helps leaders create change and advance real-world solutions to poverty. Follow IMPACT on twitter at twitter.com/impactheartland. For more info, visit www.heartlandalliance.org/research/