

Press Release

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NEBRASKANS NEED MORE TO GET BY FINANCIALLY And Even More to Get Ahead

(Lincoln, NE) - Opportunity@Work - a coalition in Nebraska focused on the financial stability of Nebraska's families and communities - released findings from its report, *The Family Bottom Line*, in Lincoln's state capitol this morning at a breakfast with state legislators and coalition partners.

The Family Bottom Line provides a way to compare how Nebraska families are faring economically relative to where they live.

"Up to now, we have tried to understand the struggles of low-incomes families without understanding the economic contexts of their daily lives," says Dr. Catherine Huddleston-Casas, assistant professor at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln and principle report researcher, "The *Family Bottom Line* provides policy makers, program directors, and family service providers with empirically based income requirements that reflect how income needs change for families as children age and how these needs vary by the population density of the counties in which these families reside."

Key findings in the report include necessary income estimates for ten different family types across population density regions in Nebraska. Findings include budget and expense breakdowns of basic needs such as child care, housing, food, transportation, health care, miscellaneous expenses and taxes, as well as the number of hours one must actually work to simply maintain the Family Bottom Line.

For example, in order to meet basic family needs independently, households with two adults, a schoolager and a preschooler need a minimum annual income of, not less than:

- \$32,817 in counties such as Cheyenne, Kearney, Polk, and Hamilton
- \$36,897 in counties such as Buffalo, Hall and Scotts Bluff
- \$40,597 in counties such as Lancaster, Douglas and Washington

- MORE -

Additional findings identify the percentage that each basic need requires of a family's income and any variations that may exist within regions in Nebraska. Child care, identified as the highest cost for most families in Nebraska, can require 22% - 28% of a family budget in two-adult households or 27% - 32% of a family budget in one-adult households. Health care, housing and food were also among the highest costs for working families striving to meet their basic needs independently.

The Family Bottom Line highlights the fact that Nebraska is often ranked very highly for the number of individuals working in Nebraska and yet, Nebraska's child and family poverty rates have been on the rise since 2000. From 2000 to 2007, child poverty in Nebraska has increased from 10% to 15% and family poverty has increased from 6.5% to over 8%. These data are unreflective of any increases that may have occurred since the economic downturn in 2008.

"Too many Nebraskans and Nebraska families are struggling below the family bottom line, and the current economic climate only adds to the struggle. We have too many families working in low-paying jobs without benefits, too many families having to work multiple jobs, and too many families without sufficient time to adequately balance work, family, and their community. To address these challenges the report outlines a series of public policy responses that will address report findings while benefiting individuals, families, businesses and communities throughout the state," says Jon Bailey, Director of the Rural Research and Analysis Program at the Center for Rural Affairs and report co-author.

According to Annemarie Bailey Fowler, Opportunity@Work Coordinator at Voices for Children in Nebraska and also a report co-author, "The Family Bottom Line reveals a realistic picture of what it takes for families to 'just get by' in Nebraska. Regardless of where a family lives or of family composition, the data in this report show that the Family Bottom Line is far higher than what is most commonly recognized. With this report, policies and programs can be designed and targeted to truly meet the needs of hard-working families in Nebraska and provide opportunities for families to move above the Family Bottom Line - to not just get by, but to get ahead."

For interviews or more information, please contact Annemarie Bailey Fowler at 402-597-3100 or annemarie@opportunityatwork.org, Jon Bailey at 402-687-2100, ext. 1013 or jonb@cfra.org, and Catherine Huddleston-Casas at 402-554-3416 or chuddleston-casas2@unlnotes.unl.edu.

Also, a thorough summary of *The Family Bottom Line* was provided at a Press Webinar by the authors on May 20, 2009. If you would like to listen to a recording of this webinar, you can access it by going to <http://www.opportunityatwork.org/webinar>

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