



GEORGIA FAMILY COUNCIL

April 16, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Stephen Daniels, Communications Manager, stephen@gafam.org; 770-242-0001

Georgia Taxpayers Shoulder \$1.46 Billion a Year Due to Divorce and Unwed Childbirth

**First-time research reveals staggering annual taxpayer cost of more than \$112 billion nationally --
more than is being spent on the war in Iraq**

ATLANTA, GA. 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 spent over the last decade. This landmark scholarly study, titled "The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing: First-Ever Estimates for the Nation and All 50 States," was released on April 15 at the National Press Club by four renowned policy and research groups—Institute for American Values, Georgia Family Council, Institute for Marriage and Public Policy, and Families Northwest.

For the state and local taxpayers of Georgia, the study estimates that the cost of family fragmentation is *at least \$1.46 billion each year*. The costs incurred by the state of Georgia make it the 9th highest of all 50 states. To put this figure in perspective, \$1.46 billion represents almost 8 percent of the 2007 state budget of \$19.2 billion.

The annual cost to the state is roughly equivalent to the annual budgets for all of the public safety efforts at the state level in Georgia (which include annual funding for the Departments of Corrections, Juvenile Justice, Defense, Public Safety, the GBI, and the State Board of Pardons and Paroles). The annual average cost of divorce and out-of-wedlock births is \$439.72 per household in Georgia.

"Though the financial costs are enormous, we cannot forget that these numbers represent real people and real suffering," said Randy Hicks, president of Georgia Family Council. "Both economic and human costs make family fragmentation a legitimate public concern. Historically, Americans have resisted the impulse to surrender to negative and hurtful trends. We fight problems like racism, poverty and domestic violence because we understand that the stakes are high. And while we'll never eliminate divorce and unwed childbearing entirely, we can certainly be doing more to help marriages and families succeed."

"These costs are due to increased taxpayer expenditures for anti-poverty, criminal justice and education programs, and through lower levels of taxes paid by individuals whose adult productivity has been negatively affected by increased childhood poverty caused by family fragmentation," said principal investigator Ben Scafidi, Ph.D., economics professor at Georgia College & State University.

“Prior research shows that marriage lifts single mothers out of poverty and therefore reduces the need for costly social benefits,” said Scafidi. “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 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 one percent reduction in rates of family fragmentation would save taxpayers \$1.1 billion.”

“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.”

“We recognize that government leaders and voters throughout the country might disagree over how much – and in what ways – government should be involved in these matters,” said Hicks. “But because the stakes are so high, citizens of good will from most every sector of American life should band together to bring about change and improve the conditions in which we live. We can certainly be doing more to help marriages and families thrive. In so doing, we can strike at the root of many social problems and lower very real human and government costs.”

More information is available at www.georgiafamily.org.

Call to book an interview with organizers of the study at 770-242-0001.

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