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PRESS RELEASE

**MORE SINGLE WORKING MOTHERS LIVE IN SUBURBS THAN CITIES
IN AMERICA'S 10 LARGEST METRO AREAS INCLUDING CHICAGO**

***Groundbreaking new data from Gary Orfield, UCLA, & Malcolm Bush, Chapin Hall, University of Chicago
on single mothers released today at forum sponsored by Eleanor Foundation***

CHICAGO -- New research sponsored by the Eleanor Foundation shows single working mothers today are predominant in the suburbs of America's 10 largest urban areas including Chicago with 4.3 million households in the suburbs, 3.9 million in the central cities and 1.8 million in small cities, and their numbers are growing fastest among white women, according to data released today from Gary Orfield, Co-Director of the Civil Rights Project at UCLA, and Malcolm Bush, Research Fellow at Chapin Hall, a policy research center at the University of Chicago.

"With today's groundbreaking findings, we hope to establish a better understanding of who these single working mothers really are," said Rosanna A. Márquez, President, Eleanor Foundation. "As this research shows, they are diverse in racial and ethnic background, but they all share the common aspiration of reaching economic self-sufficiency for themselves and their families."

A NEW NATIONAL PORTRAIT OF SINGLE WORKING MOTHERS

The Eleanor Foundation asked leading researchers to examine the state of single working mothers nationally and in the Chicago region to determine the barriers they face in achieving economic success for themselves and their families. The results demonstrate that single mothers are racially and ethnically diverse, hard workers, and share the same aspirations for economic self-sufficiency for themselves and their families as all mothers everywhere.

Gary Orfield, Co-Director of the Civil Rights Project at the University of California at Los Angeles, examined Census data for the nation's 10 largest urban areas including Chicago. The resulting picture of single mothers pierces old, unhelpful stereotypes suggesting they preferred a handout to hard work and improvement for themselves and their families. Among the key national findings:

- More single mothers live in the suburbs than in cities, including 76.6% of White single mothers, 52.1% of Black single mothers, and 58.5% of Latina single mothers.
- Single mothers head 10 million homes nationwide, and their number is growing. Unmarried mothers now account for three-fifths of all babies born to women in their early twenties and a third of those in their late 20's. This includes 27% of White newborns, 50% of Latino newborns and 71% of Black newborns.
- Single mothers aspire to educate themselves and find well-paid employment.
- There is not enough affordable housing for single working mothers and their families.

"This is not the picture of single mothers most Americans have in the back of their minds," said Orfield. "Single mothers want to be educated, to find better jobs, and see their children succeed -- and they work very hard to try to make that happen."

On May 8, 2009 President Obama stated that, "In a 21st century economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, education is the single best bet we can make not just for our individual success, but for the success of our nation as a whole...Our unemployment insurance system should no longer be a 'safety net', but a 'steppingstone' to a new future. It should offer folks educational opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have and give them skills they need to "get ahead when the economy comes back."

"It is clear from Obama's statement that we must also consider a similar change in mentality toward our welfare and job training efforts that so powerfully affect single mothers," said Orfield.

SIMILAR FINDINGS IN THE CHICAGO REGION

Findings were largely similar for the Chicago region. Malcolm Bush, Research Fellow at Chapin Hall examined Census data for the nine-county Chicago Primary Statistical Area (PMSA). Among the Chicago findings:

- Single mothers now head 38.6% (84,942) of the households in the Chicago region. Among these single mothers, 49% are Black, 25% are White, and 23% are Latinas.
- Single mothers are almost equally divided between the City of Chicago and its suburbs, and live in all parts of the region and their number is growing.
- Up to 76% of single mothers in the Chicago region are employed—with 77% of those employed working 35 hours a week or more, and less than 10% receive public assistance. Yet, 38.5% of single mothers still earn \$30,000 per year or less.
- More than half of Chicago-area single mothers (53.0%) are housing distressed, spending 50% or more of their income on housing costs, and many who rent have lost their homes due to foreclosure.

"Whether you're talking about Chicago or other major cities, the picture is clear," said Bush. "Single working mothers face similar economic barriers across the country that need to be addressed if they and their families are to succeed."

SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT SINGLE WORKING MOTHERS

From the research, it is clear that existing strategies to stem the economic decline of single working mothers do not work as well as intended. True sustainability can only be achieved by ensuring first that single working mothers have access to **appropriate, career-oriented education and training**, and **reliable, quality childcare**. Only once these fundamentals of sustainability are in place will additional supporting elements be truly effective, including **access to affordable housing**; **expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**; **access to healthcare for children**; and **adequate maternity leave for working mothers**.

"If you don't give up on yourself, you can find the resources you need," said Kamilyn Baskerville, an Eleanor Foundation program participant. "You just have to be a positive role model for yourself and your family and never consider yourself a victim."

The findings were released today at *Valuing Working Mothers: The Future of Our Communities*, an invitation-only breakfast forum at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago that included a regional panel of community leaders discussing sustainable strategies to support single working mothers and their children with additional participants including Consuella L. Brown, Program Director, Woods Fund of Chicago, Anne Ladky, Executive Director, Women Employed, Maria C. Lin, Program Director-HR, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Kamilyn Baskerville, Eleanor Woman, and Sylvia Puente, Executive Director, Latino Policy Forum.

"The stereotype of the single mother is over," said Sylvia Puente, Executive Director of the Latino Policy Forum. "These women of diverse backgrounds are a fundamental part of the American economy. They work hard and aspire to succeed economically. We owe them and their children a sustainable safety net to make sure that success comes to pass."

The Eleanor Foundation is a premier public grantmaking fund uniquely focused on investing in programs for low-income working female heads-of-households in Chicago who strive for sustainable economic independence. It provides funding, research, and institutional expertise to organizations to create and track innovative programs that address the core barriers faced by working women seeking economic security. For more information, please visit www.eleanorfoundation.org

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