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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Institute Releases 2015 Public Policy Agenda: It's time to 'Get Indiana Back to Work' for Hoosier Families**

**Indianapolis, IN**—Providing opportunities for Hoosiers to get and keep stable and family-sustaining jobs tops the 2015 Public Policy Agenda of the Indiana Institute for Working Families (Institute).

The most important tool available for the success of Hoosier families – a job – isn't what it used to be. Even as Hoosiers have stepped up to work following the recession and the state's unemployment rate has fallen in response, the number of impoverished and low-income Hoosiers continues to grow, reaching record-breaking levels. If policymakers are to stop the full decade-and-a-half of losses for lower- and middle-income families dead in its tracks, our state will need to 'Get Indiana Back to Work' with policies that will have a measurably positive impact for working Hoosier families.

In response, Indiana's policymakers should provide a toolbox of policies to restore the promise of economic mobility for Hoosier families. "When we talk about a 'toolbox', we're highlighting the role that state policies play in the ability for families to thrive," said Jessica Fraser, Program Manager of the Institute. "Policymakers should judge proposals by whether they **reward** hard-working Hoosiers and ensure they share in economic growth, **strengthen** work support programs for our most vulnerable citizens, and ultimately **equip** all Hoosiers with the opportunity to obtain the skills necessary in order to attract high-paying, quality jobs that are necessary for a family's economic self-sufficiency," Fraser said.

The policy tools recommended by the Institute include:

- Eliminate the Childcare Benefit Cliff to encourage work and restore the most basic incentive for upward mobility, and ensure that a raise equals an increase in net resources.
- Establish a Work Sharing program to provide firms with the flexibility to keep workers on the job, while also creating savings to the unemployment insurance trust fund.
- Eliminate SNAP Asset Limits to encourage savings behaviors that lead to self-sufficiency and create efficiencies in the program by eliminating antiquated rules.

Additional recommendations to increase Hoosiers' education, skills and economic opportunities include:

- Increase Financial Aid and Services for the part-time and adult students that make up a majority of Indiana's post-secondary population, prioritizing low-income working and parent students.

- Promote the statewide establishment of Prior Learning Assessments, to give adults with work or military experience the opportunity to receive academic credit for prior learning at reduced cost.
- Create an Adult Literacy Tax Credit to provide low-skilled adults with foundational skills, including occupational and financial literacy, which will allow increased opportunities for additional education, skill development, work and income.

“If we are to better prepare Indiana’s working families for a brighter economic future, then state policies such as these that reward, strengthen, and equip Hoosier families for success are more critical than ever,” said Fraser.

The Institute’s full 2015 Public Policy Agenda can be found online at <http://www.incap.org/2015Agenda.html>

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## **ABOUT THE INDIANA INSTITUTE FOR WORKING FAMILIES**

The Indiana Institute for Working Families – a program of the Indiana Community Action Association (INCAA) – conducts research and promotes public policies to help Hoosier families achieve and maintain economic self-sufficiency. The Institute is the only statewide program in Indiana that combines research and policy analysis on federal and state legislation, public policies, and programs impacting low-income working families. The Institute achieves its work through advocacy and education, and through national, statewide, and community partnerships. The Institute was founded in 2004. To learn more about the Institute, please visit: [www.incap.org/iiwf.html](http://www.incap.org/iiwf.html)

## **ABOUT THE INDIANA COMMUNITY ACTION ASSOCIATION (IN-CAA)**

The Indiana Community Action Association, Inc. (IN-CAA) is a statewide not-for-profit membership corporation, incorporated in the State of Indiana in 1970. IN-CAA’s members are comprised of Indiana’s 23 Community Action Agencies (CAAs), which serve all of Indiana’s 92 counties. IN-CAA envisions a state with limited or no poverty, where its residents have decent, safe, and sanitary living conditions, and where resources are available to help low-income individuals attain self-sufficiency. IN-CAA serves as an advocate and facilitator of policy, planning and programs to create solutions and share responsibility as leaders in the War on Poverty. IN-CAA’s mission is to help the state’s CAAs address the conditions of poverty through: training and technical assistance; developing models for service delivery; and providing resources to help increase network capacity. For more information about IN-CAA, please visit: [www.incap.org](http://www.incap.org)