

## IFCI Statement on Recently Released Poverty Data from the U.S. Census Bureau

By Rose Frech, *Assistant Director for Government Funding and Advocacy*

Cleveland is the worst in child poverty<sup>1</sup> among large cities, according to recently released data by the U.S. Census Bureau.

"This is a heartbreaking confirmation of what we have observed in our work for many years: children, families, and communities in Cleveland are suffering," says Dr. Ben Kearney, Executive Vice President at OhioGuidestone and IFCI Fellow. "There is no uncertainty around the long-term implications of poverty on a child's brain structure and stress response. The research is clear — children who grow up poor experience toxic stress at high rates and are at higher risk for negative outcomes across almost all indicators.

"Now more than ever, we need to embrace a 'WE' approach to tackle this issue, as not one agency or policy can create the level of change that is necessary. We all must play a role. We all need to do better."

At the Institute of Family and Community Impact (IFCI), our mission is to enhance lives and build stronger communities for individuals at all stages of life through innovation, research and evaluation, professional training and development, and advocacy. We will continue to focus our efforts on children and families living in poverty through both upstream and downstream approaches.

"In spite of this adversity, there is hope for recovery for individuals who have experienced the toxic stress of living in poverty, as well as a great deal we can do to prevent poverty in our communities directly," says Kearney. "At the IFCI, we are continuing our quest to develop and disseminate best-practice prevention strategies and science-based interventions to mitigate the impact of poverty and toxic stress on the brain.

"We will continue to train professionals in health care, education and social services throughout the state on trauma-informed care principles, in order to promote healthier and more joy-filled environments and build networks of supportive caregivers for all children. Building these protective factors and promoting resilience is a top priority for us. Through our nonpartisan advocacy work, we will fight for common-sense public policies that improve the lives of our neediest children and families. There is no doubt that this is a complex, multi-faceted issue with no one solution. We commit to do our part to create brighter future for Cleveland's children."

1. Campbell, Emily. (Sept. 30, 2019). "Cleveland ranks 1-2-3 in poverty." The Center for Community Solutions. [www.communitysolutions.com/cleveland-ranks-1-2-3-poverty/](http://www.communitysolutions.com/cleveland-ranks-1-2-3-poverty/)