

**DRAFT Report of the
112th ARIZONA TOWN HALL
“Strong Families Thriving Children”
Sheraton Crescent Hotel, Arizona
November 14-16, 2019**

Introduction

"When families are strong and stable, so are children - showing higher levels of wellbeing and more positive outcomes. But when things go wrong - either through family breakdown or a damaged parental relationship - the impact on a child's later life can be devastating."

- Iain Duncan Smith, Member of Parliament of the United Kingdom

Strong families and thriving children provide the foundation for strong communities and a thriving society. We know that family and child well-being are important public health issues. On average, the estimated lifetime cost of child maltreatment is about \$210,000 for each victim – and that only considers the financial cost.

The 2011-2012 National Survey of Children Health found that Arizona has the highest rate in the nation for children who have experienced two or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) – traumatic events that take place in a child’s life before age 18 that harm their body and brain development. More than 18% of Arizona children have experienced three or more ACEs. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation 2018 Kids Count profile, 24% of Arizona children live in poverty compared to 19% at the national level. The Foundation also found that while the national average of children in foster care is 6 in 1,000 children, in Arizona that rate is 10 per 1,000 children. Given these facts, it is to our benefit as Arizonans to better understand what makes a family strong and what we can do to help Arizona’s children thrive. And we must decide what, if anything, we should do to help Arizona’s families and children thrive. To answer these questions, we should consider the relationships and processes that support and protect families and family members, especially during times of adversity and change. We need to understand how family strengths help to maintain family cohesion while also supporting the development and well-being of individual family members. And we should consider what constitutes a family today and recognize children are not solely the responsibility of only their immediate families alone, but rather of the broader community as well.

Set against this backdrop, participants in the 112th Arizona Town Hall traveled from throughout Arizona to convene in Phoenix for three days to consider the topic of Strong Families Thriving Children in Arizona and to develop consensus on focused recommendations regarding what Arizona can do next to support the goal of strong families and thriving children.

The 112th Arizona Town Hall invited a robust, respectful policy discussion and participants hope their recommendations will inspire and motivate our state’s leaders to respond to these challenges. The results of the discussions at the 112th Arizona Town Hall are included in this report. Though not all Town Hall participants agree with each of the conclusions and recommendations, this report reflects the overall consensus reached at the 112th Arizona Town Hall.

Supporting and Strengthening Families

Strengthening and supporting families is fundamental to strong societal systems and structures. Families include cultural connections, traditions, and behaviors and form a supportive network. They may be multigenerational and blended and are comprised of both formal and informal structures. Our changing society requires a broader view of the family unit and does not need to be limited to family of origin. In fact, some choose their own families, looking to friends and social groups for their support.

Strong families share time, space, beliefs, and trust. They depend on each other and walk down life's path together. They are the very building blocks of our communities. Children, elderly, and vulnerable members need assistance and guidance to thrive and a strong family commits to care for, support one another, and help meet one another's needs. Families need to transcend from simply meeting the basic obligations of food and shelter to include the nurturing that offers hope that can carry members beyond limiting circumstances. No one factor is definitive but love and caring are critical.

Strong families teach resilience, leadership, and coping skills. A strong family creates positive expectations and goals. Ultimately a strong family is grounded, whether emotionally, spiritually, or otherwise. In overcoming obstacles and adversity, they build skills needed to succeed.

Supporting and strengthening families is important. Strong families are able to care for people at every stage of life from infancy, to the elderly, and members with special needs. Strong families provide children an opportunity to gain independence and succeed. Social and emotional support services play an important role in helping families grow strong and overcome the challenges they face.

Families help us to understand our society and its norms. A family teaches its members to love one another, to support one another, to be resilient, and to thrive. A family helps to promote a capable and strong workforce. Families comprise a complex and dynamic system of behaviors, actions, and beliefs. The family is the fabric of our society. Our policies and public and private investments should support and strengthen families in Arizona.

Strong Families and Thriving Children Share a Sense of Security and Attachment

Strong families and thriving children share two fundamental characteristics that foster resiliency in the face of adversity and encourage personal development: security and attachment.

Every family, and especially every child, should be able to feel safe within their home and their community and should be free from child abuse, domestic violence, sex trafficking, and trauma. Safety and security includes caring adults, adequate housing, stable employment that provides a livable wage, access to quality child care, education, transportation, nutritious food, and health care. Though wealth alone does not solve problems, lacking elemental levels of security severely jeopardizes a family's ability to thrive and be resilient. Security also comes from knowing about and having access to social services and resource assistance.

Related to security is a family's social connections. Social connections create safety nets for families when they struggle. Connections build resiliency and give parents confidence so they can survive and thrive despite setbacks. Social connections also protect against loneliness and isolation, which tend to inhibit individuals from seeking help when it is needed. Seeing others who need help at times begins to normalize help-seeking behavior and allows individuals to overcome the shame or stigma they might associate with reaching out. This system of social scaffolding helps families reach their highest potential.

Attachment within the family unit is also fundamental to a strong family with thriving children. A family comprised of individuals who are physically, mentally, and emotionally present for one another in a loving and respectful manner is likely to produce confident children who feel safe, protected, and valued; who have good communication skills, strong moral values, and healthy boundaries; and who exhibit

positive behaviors. This result can be seen particularly in the love, care, and support coming from families comprised of several different generations of interdependent members.

Attachment to culture and tradition is also important. It provides a sense of place and identity, and a feeling of belonging, particularly for families who do not feel part of the majority culture. Individuals who are secure in their place within their culture can celebrate, embrace, and preserve their culture rather than seeing it as a barrier. This allows them to develop confidence and a sense of self.

A strong family that feels secure and connected is much better equipped to raise children who are physically, spiritually, and emotionally resilient.

Challenges

The challenges for supporting and strengthening families and children start with funding. Lack of funding, especially in rural and tribal communities, makes it increasingly difficult to provide social and emotional support programs and services, recruit experienced and qualified professional staff to address family challenges, and attract and retain high quality educators.

Poverty, Arizona's high rate of incarceration resulting in family separation, lack of access to affordable child care and pre-K programs, and technology gaps including lack of universal Internet access, are barriers many families face.

We need to do more to promote access to quality healthcare, including preventative and mental health care. Many families face challenges with newborns and would benefit from home visits and preventative care. Affordable housing and homelessness are also key challenges impacting families and children.

In all communities, physical distance can also be a challenge, especially in rural and tribal communities. Lack of public transportation restricts mobility, which in turns limits access to support services.

We must also address historical and systemic trauma, which are being passed along both environmentally and genetically, and are perpetuating the disparities and inequities in communities. These inequities along with barriers arising from language, implicit bias, and racial disparities create unique challenges for families, educators, and policymakers to overcome.

Opportunities

We have many opportunities to address the challenges we face. Two key areas are improving early identification of at-risk families and increasing access to affordable, quality childcare and pre-K education.

Providing assistance to families by the whole community requires enhancing the community's awareness of such challenges and developing data-driven public policy decisions. We need to provide necessary resources and train educators and other community members to do a better job of identifying families who are at risk and to support them before they face challenges. Early identification can improve access to needed services and must be provided in a non-judgmental way that does not stigmatize but instead proactively works with families and children. Early identification and intervention may improve well-being and reduce the likelihood of learning deficiencies, behavioral challenges, and incarceration.

An interdisciplinary approach presents real opportunities for improvement. There are opportunities to greatly improve collaboration and coordination of schools, faith-based organizations, local, county, state, and tribal government, and community partnerships to address the challenges we identified. First Things First is an example of a public agency that is helping to develop bridges among our current silos.

Encouraging children to participate in athletics, arts, and other extracurricular activities plays a large role in teaching children lessons about life. The expense of participation impacts the opportunities for children. It makes it difficult for people who are under-resourced to engage in those positive activities that can support their development. We need to find ways to ensure that these expenses do not restrict participation.

Arizona must reconsider its spending priorities. Strengthening and providing consistent and increased funding to public schools is important. A budget is a moral document that reflects our values. Should we continue our commitment to spend on prisons rather than on preventing the causes of incarceration?

Public libraries and other resource centers are valuable. They open doors and opportunities. When allocating limited resources, we need to ensure they remain available.

Technology provides an opportunity for many improvements, including to education, health care, and social services. We can enhance these improvements by providing universal access to broadband.

Non-profits also provide great opportunities to meet the needs of families. They can focus on localized needs and connect families to the closest resources.

Arizona's robust tax credit system may provide an opportunity for people to direct resources where they want them to go but, we need to recognize that they can divert resources away from other needed programs.

Mentorship programs and pipelines can show young people they have more opportunities.

We need to ensure efforts to support and strengthen families is culturally responsive, encourages diverse programs and arts, develops resiliency, increases community connections, teaches children to dream, and then guides them to live those dreams.

Challenges and Opportunities to Reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences

ACEs present a variety of challenges and opportunities. Simply recognizing the existence of ACEs and educating individuals who interact with children to look for signs of ACEs is a primary opportunity. These individuals include members of the medical and educational communities, particularly pediatricians, teachers, clergy, first responders, law enforcement, and other first-line early care providers. In addition to educating those who work with children, we also need to raise awareness of ACEs through the broader community. Once everyone understands ACEs are not just something that happens to other people's kids, we can begin to eliminate the stigma associated with ACEs, encourage early identification, and promote intervention in advance of an ACE occurring.

Reducing ACEs needs to be a priority for Arizona. Once a potential ACE is identified, we need safe, effective, expedient means to respond to the situation. We further need to ensure the child receives support in a manner that preserves the child's dignity and does not further traumatize the child. Although removal of a child from a parent may sometimes be necessary, removal in itself is an ACE and should be an option of last resort. In-home services should be available to address family needs and preserve families. For example, a child whose parent is incarcerated has already experienced one ACE. If the parent is subsequently unable to regain custody of the child after release, despite presenting no threat to the child, the child is retraumatized with another ACE. Resources expended on family reunification more effectively promote healthy families and thriving children than those expended on keeping a family apart if the parent is not a danger to the child. A similar situation exists for children removed due to poverty. Helping parents find safe and affordable housing is a far better solution for a child than removing the child from the parent due to lack of housing. We have an opportunity to realign our social services programs to prioritize family unity and we should do so.

Another opportunity to reduce ACEs involves taking actions to prevent them from occurring in the first place. To start, we can help adults who were the victims of ACEs recognize and recover from their own traumas in an effort to stop the cycle of ACEs that sometimes occurs. Recognition and intervention are important parts of the solution. For example, we can recognize that ACEs occur within the network of individuals and professions who themselves provide guidance, help, and support. We can also offer intervention services targeted to vulnerable populations, such as parents going through divorce, those with high-stress careers, single parents, migrant parents, and parents dealing with military deployments. In addition, we can educate and empower children to know how to establish healthy boundaries and prevent the occurrence of ACEs. Providing wrap-around services, a comprehensive, holistic, youth and family driven way of responding to service need, is another opportunity to prevent ACEs before kids who are struggling become parents themselves

Whatever the approach we take for reducing ACEs, one challenge is it must be multi-faceted. The factors that contribute to the occurrence of ACEs are many and varied. Poverty, wage disparity, high rates of incarceration, zero tolerance policies in schools, lack of affordable housing and child care, substance abuse, and systemic racial biases are all contributory causes of ACEs or elements that complicate the reporting of and response to ACEs. For instance, a woman who is the sole breadwinner for her family may need to work longer hours due to wage disparity. If she lacks access to affordable housing and child care, either she may be unable to provide adequate housing for her children or she may be away from home for so many hours each day she cannot provide adequate oversight of her children. The same applies to men. Either way, the children face additional risk for experiencing ACEs. Another challenge is that a caregiver can lose public benefits by earning slightly too much money, which disincentivizes attempts to move forward and creates a cycle of poverty that can be difficult to escape. As these examples show, programs to reduce ACEs must be collaborative efforts of multiple agencies and disciplines, all of which are willing to work outside of their silos to implement family and child-centered approaches. If we expect these agencies, including schools, to function as safety nets, we need to support them with funding and personnel to allow them to carry out that mission.

Factors That Protect Against ACEs

Factors that protect individuals from the negative impacts of ACEs include parental resilience, social connections, parental understanding of child development, support in times of need, and social and emotional competence. Increasing the availability of these protective factors is key to preventing and helping a child recover from the occurrence of an ACE. There is not, however, a one-size-fits-all strategy that will work for all individuals and communities. Therefore, we need to establish a framework of strategies to allow individuals and communities to adapt solutions to their own needs.

One of the primary opportunities for increasing protective factors comes from educating more people about ACEs including their impact and what to do when they occur. Educational programs can be offered by schools, faith-based communities, community service organizations, and multi-generational community centers. Providing programs at community-based centers produces an additional benefit by exposing the information to the community-at-large in addition to parents. This fosters social connections that can expand the members of a “family” offering protective factors to an individual child. It also encourages more people to become “trauma literate,” which expands the number of people able to look for signs of ACEs, intervene when warning signs arise, and reduces stigma. It also allows those who see the signs to react with sensitivity, provide informed assistance, and helps to build trust within the community, which is itself a protective factor because it encourages individuals to reach out for help when it is needed.

Community education of police and first responders presents another opportunity to expand protective factors. Although police involvement is not always the most effective response to an ACE, when they are called, police should be trained to respond in a way that is appropriate for the situation and does

not exacerbate trauma. It may also be effective to implement programs in which police partner with volunteers or social service agencies when responding to crises. This has been successfully implemented through Crisis Intervention Training programs across the state. Police should also make more of an effort to become part of the communities they police so there is a reciprocal feeling of familiarity and trust between the community and police.

Community education and awareness need not be offered just through traditional means. People live busy lives and are less inclined to use traditional means of obtaining information. Therefore, information should be presented in new ways, perhaps through utility bill inserts and social media.

We can also enhance protective factors through improving the availability of prevention resources and services. To do this, we must first improve our ability to match the underlying causes of ACEs with available resources and improve coordination across responding agencies. This includes working with agencies responsible for child welfare, immigration, and criminal justice to prioritize family stability and unity when creating and implementing policies and practices. In addition, new programs that are developed must be fully funded to allow them to move beyond the pilot phase. Schools and early childhood education programs are natural community centers and, if fully funded, could provide protective factors from a holistic approach, including after-school programs, opportunities for family interaction, sports, arts, outdoor programs, and programs to promote empowerment and teach social and emotional competencies. For any of these efforts to succeed, however, civic leaders must be engaged to make them aware of ACEs and to garner their commitment to support programs to increase protective factors.

Available Resources and Opportunities for Improvement

The resources that are available to support Arizona's families and children and the allocation of these resources remain a challenge to the goal of promoting strong families and thriving children.

Lack of funding for public education makes it difficult to attract and retain teachers and make necessary physical improvements to schools that support our children and families. Affordable quality child care is needed, especially in rural areas, but this also requires state funding. Both of these needs underscore the concern that the prioritization and allocation of state and local funding are not sufficiently data-driven, based on sound fiscal practices, or evidence-based. As a result, funding decisions do not meet the needs of Arizona's diverse communities. Sometimes we cut state funding in the name of efficiency, but as a result we turn back federal monies that would help us address the problem and provide more economic and educational opportunities. We need to ensure we take advantage of all available resources, especially federal matching funds. We need to re-prioritize criminal justice funding to provide for families and children. By reducing prison populations more state resources can focus on prevention and providing services people need to ensure they do not return to the system. Prison privatization leads to unique challenges because it introduces the profit motive into pulling the dollars from other resources to incarceration. We also need to look at the mandatory sentencing program in Arizona and evaluate the length of the sentences and when prison should be mandatory.

Arizona is lacking a funding stream to support other needed services for the long-term. As an example, the 2-1-1 information service is no longer fully funded so it is difficult to keep resource information updated to assist the public. Furthermore, funding coming to the state is not sufficiently allocated for rural and tribal communities.

Interagency coordination, integrated wellness centers, collective impact modeling, and community based participatory research are several promising strategies that may provide examples of how to effectively collaborate with limited resources and leverage stakeholder impact. Collaborative inputs are likewise important to consider if these resources are to produce fair, responsive and effective outcomes. Leaders and policymakers need to listen to diverse inputs, including our immigrant, minority, Native

American, and at-risk communities when determining the proper amount and appropriate allocation of the available resources. The collective impact approach is one opportunity to bring various groups together to all pull in the same direction to address entrenched challenges. It is a process to reach a goal. It is a mindset of interdependence, not competition. It is dynamic and evolves. To succeed long term, collective impact needs support throughout these groups and they need to work together to support the effort to ensure continuity and success.

Geographical limitations, lack of transportation, and availability of resources are the main issues. Challenges in availability and accessibility could be overcome by expanding mobile, pop-up, and integrated services, bringing services to those in need.

Service provider resources are frequently diverted to ad hoc report requirements, compliance activities, and paperwork rather than focused on delivery of services to those in need. It is important to balance data collection with adequate service delivery. Data collection and compliance reporting should be fully funded so service delivery does not become a casualty of onerous reporting and data collection requirements. Lack of services outside of Maricopa County is particularly problematic. We do not dedicate enough resources to distribute them broadly. The inequitable distribution disrupts families, especially in counties outside Maricopa, because the families must spend time traveling to get the resources. Maricopa County is not immune, as there are areas within the county that experience inequitable distribution of services, resources, finances, and tax revenue.

Emerging programs have the potential to improve how resources are being used. For example, Healthy Families is an early childhood home visitation program with an emphasis on serving low-income communities and Healthy Steps is a pediatric care program with an emphasis on serving low-income communities. In addition, the Family First Prevention Services Act, a federal law passed in 2018, adopts overdue child safety and welfare reforms.

Additionally, many families in need are unaware of available services so we need to increase awareness and education. Utilizing technology to make information available for people trying to navigate the system could help facilitate the process. Mobile applications such as Find Help Phoenix, 2-1-1 Arizona (if fully funded), social media, and bilingual text messages can increase preventative behaviors and service utilization. In addition, funding could be provided for PreK-12 teachers to enhance their skills beyond education so they can help identify needs and provide ready resources for children and families in need. Caregivers need to be considered when thinking about services for families and children and appropriate communication strategies.

Housing for families, particularly for young adults with children, is difficult in terms of affordability, accessibility, and other factors. The situation is expected to worsen as our population increases. Arizona should seek creative solutions and one example might be partnering young families with seniors who have rooms to spare and would also benefit from these types of connections.

Too often, non-profit organizations that would be natural partners are competing against one another instead of collaborating to provide services. Smaller non-profits are often not afforded the same opportunities as larger agencies, though they are often better connected to the people in the community because they are more accessible.

Strengthen Arizona's Families and Children Through Economic and Educational Opportunities

Arizona should take advantage of its varied economic and educational opportunities to strengthen families and children, particularly in rural areas of the state. Rural Arizona tends to experience recessions first and recover from them last. Rural communities also feel the impact of an uneven distribution of opportunities, services, and resources across the state. These disparities extend to Arizona's educational systems.

Arizona's failure to fully fund its education system (from birth through secondary education) impacts full and consistent strategies for teaching students with different learning styles and language proficiencies, and does not allow for adequate access to job training and vocational and technical internships which negatively impacts Arizona's families and children. The less educated Arizona's workforce, the harder it is to attract businesses offering high paying jobs and a worker earning lower wages needs to work longer hours and often multiple jobs to support a family. Ultimately, this time spent working is time not spent strengthening the family.

Opportunities exist, however, to improve education opportunities in Arizona. *Community Schools* (communityschools.org), which involve partnerships between a school and other community resources, provide a myriad of services in addition to education. By adopting an integrated approach to academics, youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development, *Community Schools* strengthen families and improve student outcomes. In addition, Arizona should recognize that economic development and education are intertwined and that improvements to one will ultimately benefit the other. Because of that, the public and private sectors should integrate, coordinate, and collaborate on developing economic and educational opportunities. Arizona must also commit to creating, across the state, quality early education for all, including access to quality child care, full day kindergarten, and providing technical training as a part of local public education. We also need to ensure students have adequate educational and financial literacy to evaluate the value of post-secondary educational programs. Reducing drop-out rates, as well as improving high school graduation rates – and graduation rates for youth in foster care in particular – are specific issues where opportunities exist for major improvement. Lastly, Arizona should consider following other states that have adopted model tuition refund programs similar to *Yuma Promise* and *La Paz Promise*, through which Arizona Western College has committed to refund all out of pocket tuition and expenses incurred by students who complete transfer degrees in no more than five semesters.

We must grow Arizona's qualified workforce and incentivize businesses to create good jobs in Arizona. Arizona has an opportunity to improve access to economic development opportunities and promote job growth through its Industrial Development Authorities (IDA). IDAs can be especially effective in providing bond financing in rural communities to advance business development. However, infrastructure development is also needed to support economic growth.

Family and Community Roles

Affordable housing is a major issue and one that is growing. We need focused investments on increasing affordable housing to meet the needs of low and moderate-income Arizona families.

Local and county governments along with faith-based organizations and school districts need to support and encourage meal programs, affordable child care and pre-K education, out-of-school-time programs such as Camp Colley, and other strategies to connect families, children and communities. These organizations should consider single campuses or one-stop shops that bring together multiple agencies to engage families and provide needed social and emotional supports including vocational training, job search, housing, food security, and healthcare. These campuses can include social service agencies that utilize a "wrap-around" approach to connect families and children who may be in need with the appropriate resources that are available to them.

Both the public and private sectors should encourage family-friendly policies such as parental leave to nurture and support the development of strong families and children. Another idea is that businesses should be encouraged to privately fund quality childcare as a means for supporting their workforce.

Government needs to review its processes to ensure that public policies align with building strong families and healthy children. We need to provide support to families in a practical way. Unlicensed kinship

care providers receive significantly less financial and programmatic support than licensed caregivers. Arizona should take clear steps to remove systemic barriers that block support for children in foster care in unlicensed kinship families. This includes barriers to be licensed as a foster home and to receive an equal foster home care payment.

Partnerships between schools and community organizations such as faith-based organizations, non-profit organizations, and businesses can help to support longer-term projects that bring families together. Projects may include community-building, business mentoring, and school gardens (which also teach skills to prevent food insecurity and strengthens cultural ties).

We also need to support cultural differences in our diverse communities and the unique needs of families. We must ensure we provide culturally sensitive services to respect all of our communities. LGBTQIA families and communities can find it difficult to access services. We need to consider gender identity and expression outside its traditional perceptions and be aware of biases. We need to be open to all who have needs.

Priority Actions

The following actions are the top priorities for creating strong families and thriving children in Arizona.

- **Coordination of Existing Services.** A variety of programs supporting families and children already exist but could be better coordinated. The governmental and non-profit agencies offering these services should work together to improve service coordination, make information about existing programs available in a cohesive manner, and strategically use resources. This process should include soliciting community input, especially from individuals with lived experiences, about needs and challenges and publicizing the availability of programs.
- **Education.** Arizona must revise its school funding formula and the sources of school income in order to address inequities in the resources received by different schools and establish a per pupil budget that meets the educational needs of our students. Overall education funding also must be increased in order to implement the following changes: make pre-K and all-day kindergarten education available to all; reduce class sizes; increase pay for teachers and others who work in schools; fund needed physical improvements for school facilities; enhance training for pre-K to 12th grade teachers; expand school-based nursing, social work and counseling services; and, expand out-of-school-time quality programming, to facilitate screening, identification and addressing ACEs.
- **Criminal Justice Reform.** Arizona must end mandatory sentencing and give judges more sentencing discretion with the goal of keeping families together. Reducing incarceration rates will allow resources to be shifted to meet the needs of children and families.
- **Child Welfare.** Arizona must fully implement the Family First Prevention Services Act. We must remove systemic barriers and increase the ability of kinship caregivers to be licensed as foster parents and increase the financial and programmatic support they receive. We must increase the child care subsidy to make it more affordable. Caseloads for social service workers should be reduced to effective levels and social service agencies should receive trauma training so case workers can screen for, identify, and help to prevent ACEs and make appropriate referrals for resources and services. Arizona should institute a program in which every home with a newborn has the opportunity to receive a home visit to identify needs and provide parenting instruction and mentorship at a critical time in the life of a family.

- **Health Care.** Arizona should ensure access to quality basic physical health and mental health care for all. Arizona must also fund family planning services, including support for women so they can have healthy babies.
- **Child Care.** Arizona should ensure that affordable, high-quality child care is available to all. Child care should accommodate a variety of schedules to include nights, evenings, and weekends. Part of this need can be met by encouraging employers to provide child care for their employees. The child care subsidy should be increased to cover the cost of providing high quality child care, and to help to facilitate increased wages for early childhood educators.
- **Parental Leave.** All employers should be encouraged to offer paid parental leave.
- **Funding Priorities.** Increase funding for housing, education, mental health care, physical health care, quality child care, and to reduce the impact of ACEs.
- **Eligibility Caps.** Arizona should assess the impact of income caps for public benefits. Arizona should encourage upward mobility by mitigating the fiscal cliffs for low income families that occur when a marginal increase in income results in a loss of critical public benefits (such as TANF, Child Care Subsidy, AHCCCS, Housing, etc.). The change needs to include a gradual transition so the cliff becomes a gentle slope.

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken [people].”

Frederick Douglass