FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 14, 2016

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LIFT STATEMENT ON NEW CENSUS BUREAU DATA ON POVERTY, INCOME INEQUALITY AND HEALTH INSURANCE

Washington, D.C. – Yesterday, the U.S. Census Bureau released its annual estimates on income, poverty and health insurance coverage. The new data show that in 2015, poverty and unemployment were down, median household income was up and the number of Americans with health insurance was at an all-time high. This is the first time in decades the numbers have conclusively moved in the right direction - encouraging news and progress we must sustain. However, there are still far too many Americans who fall below the poverty line, especially children and families of color.

According to the Census, 43.1 million people lived in poverty in the United States in 2015. Of those, more than 14 million were children. The data also show that children of color are disproportionately more likely to be poor. In fact, 32.9 percent of black and 28.9 percent of Hispanic children lived in poverty – more than double their white and Asian peers.

While the scope of poverty is significant, the effects – especially during a child’s earliest years – are even more concerning. Research tells us that children living in poverty are more likely to suffer lifelong consequences, including increased likelihood of poor educational outcomes, lower wages, higher rates of incarceration and greater risk of disease and disability.

At LIFT, we believe in a holistic approach that focuses on building parents’ and caregivers’ personal well-being, social connections and financial strength so that they are better able to provide their children with a strong start in life. By helping families access healthcare and public benefits, obtain education and job training, improve their financial capabilities and connect to vital services like childcare, we can meet basic needs and work toward long-term aspirations.

We celebrate the progress affirmed in yesterday’s data and recognize how far still we have to go in addressing the barriers low-income families face as they strive to achieve economic opportunity for themselves and for future generations. With nearly 20 percent of American children living in poverty today, we must redouble our commitment to act now to ensure that we do not perpetuate a legacy of poverty.

About LIFT
LIFT is a national nonprofit dedicated to helping families break the cycle of poverty. By fostering relationships between low-income parents (members) and dedicated volunteers (advocates), we help families build the strong personal, social and financial foundations to secure immediate, critical needs and to achieve long-term goals and aspirations. LIFT connects with families through four sites located in communities with some of the highest rates of concentrated poverty: Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Washington, DC. Because this work cannot be done alone, LIFT focuses on building strong community collaborations with a wide range of local, regional and national partners to help ensure families receive the resources and support they need. To learn more, visit www.liftcommunities.org.

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