

LETTER FROM CHAIRMAN PETER LAWSON JONES

Dear Friends:

As the author of the legislation that in 1999 created the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (“OCF”) and as the panel’s current and only chairman, I am deeply gratified to share the Commission’s many successes, especially over the past two years.

The overarching mission of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood is to improve the well-being of Ohio’s children by advancing responsible fatherhood in communities throughout Ohio. Comprised of twenty commissioners representing all three branches of state government and citizens chosen by the Governor because of their extensive involvement in fatherhood issues, OCF greatly benefits from the diverse perspectives its membership offers to address, through collaboration and the development of holistic solutions, the crisis that “father absence” represents.

The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood has four primary statutory responsibilities:

1) To Fund Fatherhood Programs. Since 2008 the Commission has awarded nearly four million dollars to nineteen fatherhood programs across the state. These initiatives have provided direct services to over 9,000 fathers. The grantees were selected through a competitive application process that rewarded innovative and effective approaches to increasing paternal involvement. The focus of the successful programs includes enhancing the parenting skills of Ohio fathers, providing employment services to low-income, non-custodial dads, preventing premature fatherhood, helping incarcerated and reentering fathers remain connected or re-connect with their families and increasing public awareness of the critical role dads play in the raising and nurturing of their children.

2) To Develop Policy Recommendations. Father absence is one of the most challenging contemporary societal problems. The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood offers statutory and policy recommendations to the legislative and executive branches of both the state and federal government to promote responsible fatherhood. President Barack Obama has stated, “Government should make it easier for fathers to be involved in their children's lives, not harder.” The OCF legislative staff has met with the office of every member of the Ohio Congressional delegation and most of the Ohio General Assembly – often with the legislator him

or herself – to brief them on the Commission’s work and to make recommendations on pending legislation.

3) To Engage the Community: The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood participates in and sponsors fatherhood-related programs, conferences, symposia and other forums to increase public awareness of the central role fathers’ play in their children’s lives. Community conversations result in more engaged fathers, and involved fathers, in turn, positively impact their children’s social, behavioral, psychological and cognitive outcomes.

4) To Train Professionals: The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood sponsors training sessions to build local capacity to serve fathers and families. OFC is dedicated to supporting and empowering families and communities through instruction and organizational development. The Commission has developed curriculum that both allows governmental and non-profit agencies to better engage fathers and improves program participants’ attitude about fathering.

The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood and all who are part of its network – individuals, for profit entities and community-based organizations – are working together to strengthen families and improve communities for all of Ohio’s children. On behalf of the Commission, I offer this report with the hope not only that you will find it informative but also that you will continue to help us to help even more men become responsible fathers.

Sincerely,

Peter Lawson Jones
Chairman