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## **Despite Four Years of Economic Growth, Poverty in Maryland Increases** New Data Suggests a Need to Refocus Maryland's Efforts to Combat Poverty

Silver Spring, MD -- Census Bureau data released yesterday show that although 2005 marked the fourth full year of growth in the national economy since the end of the 2001 recession, poverty in Maryland has not declined. The percentage of Marylanders in poverty grew from 7.3% in 2001, the year the recovery began, to 9.8% in 2005.

Not only are the 544,000 Marylanders living below the poverty line struggling to stay afloat, in the midst of higher costs of living, but families in the middle are also feeling the crunch.

“In an environment of ever-increasing energy, housing, health-care, and child-care costs, paired with nominal raises in low-income wages, more and more working families and individuals are struggling to make ends meet,” said Julie Varner, Chair of the Maryland Alliance for the Poor, a 20-year-old coalition of organizations that advocates in Annapolis for low-income Marylanders.

“We ask Marylanders, and the legislators they elect this fall, to come together to find promising, workable solutions to the challenges facing low-income Marylanders,” urged Ms. Varner.

Wage and salary growth has been slower in the current recovery than in *any* other comparable recovery period since the end of World War II. While the pace of job growth did pick up in 2005, even the more recent pace compares unfavorably with historical norms. Income gains that were achieved are concentrated among top earners, thereby widening the gap between these earners and middle and low-income earners.

In Maryland, according to Census data, in 2005:

- Maryland is the second wealthiest state in the nation, yet poverty persists. Two of Maryland's counties—Howard and Montgomery—are among the wealthiest counties in the nation. At the same time, the highest numbers of people living in poverty are found in Baltimore City (136,256), Prince George's (69,927), Baltimore County (52,169), Montgomery (41,122) and Anne Arundel (24,910) counties.
- Approximately 14.2% of Marylanders lacked health insurance—an increase of 2.9% from 2001. Roughly 800,000 Marylanders are uninsured.
- Maryland's child poverty rate was 10.8%, giving Maryland the second lowest child poverty rate in the nation, behind New Hampshire.

The new data provides further evidence that the current economic recovery has not been a strong one, particularly for low and middle-income workers and it reveals the large geographic disparities in income and poverty that exist in Maryland.

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