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**FATALLY FLAWED:
FAIR Blames Immigrants and Children for Maryland's Financial Problems**

In a case of very creative accounting, the nativist Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)¹ is blaming immigrants and children for Maryland's fiscal woes. In a new report, FAIR lumps together unauthorized K-12 immigrant students with U.S.-born students who have unauthorized parents and claims that they are all costing Maryland taxpayers astronomical sums in educational expenditures.² However, the report, entitled *The Cost of Illegal Immigration to Marylanders*, suffers from several fatal flaws.

FAIR Targets K-12 Students from Unauthorized Families and Pretends that They Can Simply Be Made to Leave the United States.

- According to FAIR's calculations, unauthorized immigrants are costing Maryland taxpayers \$1.9 billion dollars every year. FAIR estimates that \$1.3 billion of this estimate, or 68%, consists of K-12 education for the children of unauthorized immigrants—of whom 69% are native-born U.S. citizens.³
- FAIR justifies the decision to include U.S. citizens in its cost estimate by arguing, in essence, that even if we can't deport U.S. citizens, maybe these particular U.S. citizens will just go away if and when we get rid of their parents.⁴
- FAIR makes the same flawed argument in the case of unauthorized high-school graduates who would be eligible for in-state tuition rates at Maryland colleges and universities under the "Maryland DREAM Act."⁵ According to FAIR, not only are these kids nothing more than an "expense," but they can simply be made to pick up and leave the country, even if the United States is the only home they've ever known.
- FAIR pins its hopes on the fanciful "attrition through enforcement" strategy of immigration enforcement, in which life is made more and more difficult for unauthorized immigrants with the expectation that they will "self-deport" and take their children with them.⁶ Yet evidence suggests this is unlikely to work in the case of unauthorized families with children who are firmly rooted in this country and who therefore have every reason to tough it out and stay.⁷
- In reality, most students from unauthorized families are going to become American workers, consumers, taxpayers, and entrepreneurs when they grow up. As a result, it is in

the U.S. economy's best interest to ensure that these children are educated since that will increase their productivity, earning power, buying power, and tax payments later in life.

- In FAIR's analysis, the *adult* U.S.-born children of unauthorized immigrants are lumped in with the rest of the native-born population and their tax contributions are not credited back to the unauthorized families that raised them. They are only included as part of the unauthorized immigrant population when they are costly children—as all children are.⁸

FAIR Inflates the Size of the Unauthorized Population.

- While the Pew Hispanic Center put the number of unauthorized immigrants in Maryland at 275,000 in 2010,⁹ FAIR says that it was actually 295,000.¹⁰ The reason which FAIR offers for this difference is an example of tortured reasoning: "FAIR's estimates consider illegal aliens who have been granted temporary work permits and who will revert to illegal alien status once those temporary permits expire."¹¹ In other words, they are counted as unauthorized now because they might become unauthorized later.

FAIR Under-Counts the Tax Contributions of Unauthorized Immigrants—And Ignores the Fact that They are also Consumers and Entrepreneurs.

- The Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy estimates that Maryland households headed by unauthorized immigrants contributed \$275 million in state and local taxes in 2010.¹² FAIR only grudgingly admits that Maryland's unauthorized immigrants are themselves taxpayers and credits them with far less in tax payments: \$119 million.¹³
- FAIR overlooks the fact that unauthorized immigrants are consumers (and sometimes entrepreneurs) who spend money on goods, services, and housing—which creates jobs and generates additional tax revenue.¹⁴

FAIR Reveals Its Own Xenophobic Agenda.

- FAIR reveals its true ideological colors while enumerating additional "costs" that are allegedly associated with unauthorized immigration. For instance, FAIR cites "the impact on the education of other students if the learning environment is negatively affected by students with limited English language proficiency." Furthermore, according to FAIR, "social cohesion may be strained by foreign language communications barriers."¹⁵
 - These arguments absurdly suggest that children can't learn or form a group identity if anyone in their midst speaks a first language other than English. And these arguments are applied to all non-English speaking immigrants, not just the unauthorized.

Endnotes

¹ Southern Poverty Law Center, [*The Nativist Lobby: Three Faces of Intolerance*](#) (Montgomery, AL: February 2009), pp. 9-12.

² Jack Martin, [*The Cost of Illegal Immigration to Marylanders*](#) (Washington, DC: Federation for American Immigration Reform, May 2012).

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵ *The Washington Post*, “[Keeping Maryland’s dream alive](#),” May 5, 2012.

⁶ Michele Waslin, [*Discrediting “Self-Deportation” as Immigration Policy: Why an Attrition through Enforcement Strategy Makes Life Difficult for Everyone*](#) (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Council, February 2012).

⁷ Alexandra Filindra, [*The Myth of “Self-Deportation”: How Behavioral Economics Reveals the Fallacies behind “Attrition through Enforcement”*](#) (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Council, April 2012).

⁸ James P. Smith and Barry Edmonston, Eds., [*The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration*](#) (Washington, DC: National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences Press, 1997), p. 294.

⁹ Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [*Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010*](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 23.

¹⁰ Jack Martin, [*The Cost of Illegal Immigration to Marylanders*](#) (Washington, DC: Federation for American Immigration Reform, May 2012), p. 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹² Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy, “[Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too](#)” (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Council, April 2011).

¹³ Jack Martin, [*The Cost of Illegal Immigration to Marylanders*](#) (Washington, DC: Federation for American Immigration Reform, May 2012), p. 27.

¹⁴ Immigration Policy Center, [*Value Added: Immigrants Create Jobs and Businesses, Boost Wages of Native-Born Workers*](#) (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, January 2012).

¹⁵ Jack Martin, [*The Cost of Illegal Immigration to Marylanders*](#) (Washington, DC: Federation for American Immigration Reform, May 2012), p. 28.