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September 5, 2006

Letters to the Editor
The Plain Dealer
1801 Superior Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44114

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Dear Editor:

First in poverty, last in income, and 25% of federal community development funds lost. The headlines of the past few weeks paint a grim picture for Cleveland and Northeast Ohio.

We, as a nation, have not made a commitment to address indigence since the 1960's "War on Poverty." In the interceding years, our attention has been focused on welfare and welfare reform rather than on ending poverty. Today, ten years after welfare reform, people have not moved out of poverty. Instead, the definition of poverty has shifted and includes "the working poor." Because of low wages, job creation too often fails to protect individuals and families against poverty.

To overcome poverty we need to examine why we continue to use the same systems which cause some of us to be impoverished in the first instance. We also need community recognition that poverty is expensive. The economic cost of poverty goes beyond the direct cost of services to the poor. It affects the bottom line of our business, governmental and social communities.

The complex issue of poverty is shaped not only by the economy, but by the capacity of low-income families to thrive. Many of the poor of Northeast Ohio fall through a loosely woven safety net of services and education or training. Access, openness and equality of systems will help increase the capacity of the poor and, in-turn, help lift our community from penury.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. eloquently stated: "There is nothing new about poverty. What is new, however, is that we now have the resources to get rid of it." Let us use our business and community resources and reform systems to address this issue together.

Sincerely,


Patricia A. Poole, Esq.

Ms. Poole is a partner at Baker Hostetler and current president of the board at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.