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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **NEW REPORT REVEALS BROAD PUBLIC BACKING FOR INTERGENERATIONAL POLICY**

#### **Poll Shows Most Americans Support Stronger Generational Connections**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – Generations United has released a new report that finds a vast majority of Americans want Washington to direct future funding with an eye toward intergenerational interdependence. The report, ***Family Matters: Public Policy and the Interdependence of Generations***, which includes the results of an online survey by Harris Interactive, reveals nearly 80 percent of adults said policymakers should seek solutions that foster stronger connections between all generations.

“The polling suggests much of the policy discussion going on these days is misdirected,” said Donna Butts, executive director of Generations United. “Despite the rise in multigenerational households in the United States and the fact that generations *are* interdependent, the competition for funding programs is too often portrayed as a fight between generations. Clearly this is not what the American people want.”

Many analysts have framed the current policy debate as a choice between programs for older adults (i.e. Social Security) and those that benefit children (i.e. Head Start). According to the Harris survey, this runs contrary to how Americans want their leaders in Washington to address the issues. Highlights of the poll indicate:

- 78% of adults said policymakers should make it a priority to fund policies and initiatives that foster stronger relations/connections between older and younger people.
- 76% of adults agree publically-funded programs targeted to a specific age group (such as K-12 education or Social Security) are not burdensome responsibilities to certain age groups, but *investments* that benefit all generations.
- More than 80% of adults agree politicians sometimes pit one generation against another in order to limit public support for government funding of programs such as child care, healthcare or Social Security.

“This report makes a strong argument that, going forward, we need to work toward intergenerational solutions and not get caught in a fight that pits one generation against the other,” said John Rother, executive vice president of policy and strategy for the AARP. “It is clear that there are social benefits – both immediate and long term – to older persons and all members of society from investments in children, such as early childhood education.”

The report calls on policymakers to redefine the political discussion within a framework that reflects the growing interdependence of generations in America. It highlights initiatives that build connections between young and old, including volunteer programs and intergenerational shared sites which help combat social isolation and improve social skills. Studies cited in the report reveal people with strong social connections and a sense of purpose live longer and are better able to maintain good mental and physical health.

"Strong families and communities help produce good outcomes for children, especially those most at risk of being left out and left behind," said Ralph Smith, executive vice president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. "We won't solve problems like intergenerational poverty and the achievement gap unless we commit to investing in kids *and* their families -- helping children get a good start in life and succeed in school and making sure their parents and grandparents are economically self sufficient. Policy at the state and federal levels needs to support the simple truth that thriving families secure the best future for our children and for our country."

The fundamental question regarding intergenerational policies is not how funding is divided, but how these programs affect people's lives. They have real consequences for real people:

- Beth Finke was 3 years old when her father died. She and her siblings received Social Security survivor benefits, allowing Beth's mother to make ends meet for the family. "Without Social Security, I wouldn't have been able to afford to go to college," Beth said. Now an award-winning author, teacher and speaker, Beth credits Social Security for enabling her to support herself as an adult.
- Pamela Perry gave birth to twins, one of whom was developmentally delayed. Not wishing to split her children up when it came time to choose a childcare facility, she found an intergenerational shared site sponsored by Easter Seals in Silver Spring, MD. "Both of my children thrived at that center," Pamela said. "They really benefitted emotionally from the intergenerational program."

Generations United calls upon policymakers to apply a set of intergenerational principles which recognize shared sacrifice and promote balanced economic growth, lifetime productivity and well-being across all generations. Through a White House Conference on the Generations, all sectors would be challenged to adopt an intergenerational lens which engages all generations in building a healthier society.

Americans have traditionally valued cross-generational support that transcends households and extends to neighborhoods and communities. Generation United's new report makes a compelling case that the nation is stronger because of its solid commitment to intergenerational interaction and cooperation:

Young people repeatedly voice support for Social Security, and older people act as advocates on behalf of investments in early childhood education. Each generation does this because they view these actions as investments in their families or extended families. Policy makers and pundits may view each generation in isolation but everyday Americans think of old and young as interconnected and interdependent. It's not a fight, it's a family.

About Generations United: *Formed in 1986, Generations United is the national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. Representing more than 100 national, state, and local organizations and individuals representing more than 70 million Americans, Generations United serves as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. For more information, visit [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org).*

**\* Survey Methodology**

This survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of Generations United from September 14-16, 2010 among 2,052 adults ages 18 and older. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables, please visit [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org).