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CHILD DEATH COSTS U.S. ROUGHLY 1.5 BILLION PER YEAR

Phoenix, AZ. — The death of a child at any age could cost the U.S. economy roughly 1.5 billion dollars per year, the majority of which results from presenteeism costs, according to a recent study. Dr. Melanie Fox, an economist at Austin College, said that productivity costs are often overlooked when a child dies, yet "there is reason to be gravely concerned."

The study of 252 bereaved parents was headed up by Fox, along with Joanne Cacciatore of Arizona State University, and Jeffrey Lacasse of Florida State University. The team discovered that productivity costs associated with bereavement are staggering. However, it isn't just the days an employee misses, medical expenses, and funeral expenses that are so onerous.

"While the costs of being absent from work can be significant, the costs of being at work but distracted and unable to function are even more troublesome," says Fox. For individuals who returned to work in the first 30 days after the death of their child, their ability to function at their job was a mere 17.5 percent. "This translates to productivity losses per household of \$13,000.00, the bulk of which is due to employees being at their jobs but unfocused and unproductive. And this is just during the first six months following the death of a child," continues Fox.

Cacciatore brought Fox on to study economics in the Traumatic Experiences and Resiliency (TEAR) study because she became aware how American culture tends to skirt this tragedy. "As a culture, we tend to underestimate the emotional, social, and economic cost of child death," says Cacciatore. "We need to do much better at the provision of support to these families so that in the long-run their ability to cope as both individuals and families improves because they've been properly treated." The team believes that community support, such as better bereavement leave policies and a compassionate and educated workforce, would improve the overall outcomes for the bereaved themselves as well as for employers and society at large.

The study, "Child Death in the United States: Productivity and the economic burden of parental grief," was just published in the journal *Death Studies*. Cacciatore continues, "If we do not come together to help these families, the burden of child death will continue to affect us all in more ways than we can imagine."

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