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## **Massachusetts Ranks Second in the Nation for Child Well-Being; But Federal Cuts Could Erode Gains**

**2017 KIDS COUNT<sup>®</sup> Data Book finds MA youth lead in education and health, and many challenges persist**

BOSTON, June 13, 2017 — Children in Massachusetts lead the nation in educational achievement and also rank favorably in health measures, but more than one in seven children remains in poverty, according to the *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The annual report, which ranks Massachusetts second overall, measures child well-being state-by-state across four categories: health, education, economic well-being, and family and community context.

"Our *KIDS COUNT Data Book* rankings in education and health remind us that investments in our children are paying off," said **Noah Berger**, president of MassBudget, which is also home to the Annie E. Casey Foundation *KIDS COUNT* program in Massachusetts. "The challenge our Commonwealth faces is finding ways to build on what we are doing right so that all children, in all of our communities, have a real opportunity to thrive."

Massachusetts ranks second in the nation for child health according to a composite measure of several indicators. Additionally, with just 1 percent of children in the state lacking health insurance, Massachusetts is tied for first place on this indicator.

Despite this progress, these achievements could be threatened by federal budget cuts or by the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. A MassBudget report earlier this year found that one-in-four dollars in the state budget comes from the federal government, with the largest share in federal support (\$9.44 billion) for the Commonwealth's Medicaid program (MassHealth). The program provides affordable health insurance to almost 1.9 million residents of the Commonwealth, including 633,000 children.

"While we lead the nation in providing access to health care for kids, that success could be reversed if the Affordable Care Act is repealed," Berger said.

The *Data Book* also showed that Massachusetts leads the nation in key education indicators, including having the lowest percentage of fourth graders not reading at grade level and the lowest percentage of eighth graders not proficient in math. However, with 50 percent of fourth graders and 49 percent of eighth grade students below proficient, the report also reveals that we have a lot further to go as a state and as a country.

Massachusetts' 13<sup>th</sup> place ranking on economic well-being this year, down two spots from last year, points to the fact that raising the incomes of low- to- middle-income families and improving employment opportunities remain important challenges for our

Commonwealth. Twenty-eight percent of children are in families where no parents have full-time, year-round employment, in many cases impeding parents' abilities to provide the stable environment proven to help kids thrive.

A broad array of state policies can make life better for children. New Jersey, Rhode Island, California and New York provide parents and other workers with statewide insurance-style programs for paid family and medical leave. Research shows that when parents can take time to bond with and care for a new child, it can have long-term positive effects.

### **Release Information**

The *2017 Data Book* will be available June 13 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at <http://databook.kidscount.org>, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices.

### **About MassBudget**

MassBudget is home to KIDS COUNT in Massachusetts, a national and state-by-state effort funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track and improve the well-being of children across the United States. The Massachusetts KIDS COUNT Advisory Council brings together leaders who work to make life better for all children in Massachusetts.

You can read MassBudget's recent fact sheets on Paid Family and Medical Leave, including how the program differs from similar programs ([HERE](#)), how such programs impact businesses and families in other states ([HERE](#)), how Massachusetts residents currently cope without paid leave ([HERE](#)) and answers to frequently asked questions ([HERE](#)).

For more information on evidence-based strategies to support children from pre-kindergarten through high school, see the [Roadmap to Expanding Opportunity](#).

### **About the Annie E. Casey Foundation**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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