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Michigan continues to rank in bottom half nationally in child well-being

Report shows threat to Michigan kids posed by possible undercount in 2020 Census

LANSING, MICHIGAN— Michigan ranks in the bottom half of the nation in every aspect of child well-being according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The state's rankings have fallen or stagnated in areas of economic well-being, education, family and community and health. Recent legislation, as well as a possible undercount in the 2020 Census, will make the status of Michigan's children even more precarious.

"The numbers released today reflect the priorities of our state's leaders. Although we hear messaging around Michigan becoming a stronger state filled with a talented young workforce, the policies and budget choices made by lawmakers do not show a desire to improve the well-being of young people," said Gilda Z. Jacobs, president and CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy. "If we want a talented workforce in the future, we need to invest more in early childhood education, communities and families today."

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — as an assessment of child well-being. In the 2018 *Data Book*, Michigan received an overall ranking of 33rd with the following national rankings:

- **31st in economic well-being:** 21 percent of Michigan kids live in poverty, which is higher than the national average of 19 percent.
- **38th in education:** 69 percent of eighth-graders are not proficient in math and 68 percent of fourth-graders are not proficient in reading. Math proficiency has stalled, and there has been 0 percent change in the percentage of kids graduating on time compared to 2009-2011
- **25th in health:** A bright spot for Michigan is the percentage of children with health insurance, due to in part to the state's decision to expand Medicaid through Healthy Michigan. Currently, only 3 percent of children in Michigan are without health insurance, but that is now threatened by irresponsible legislation around work requirements..
- **30th in family and community:** 17 percent of kids live in high-poverty areas, making Michigan one of the worst six states in the nation for that indicator (ranked 44th).

In fact, since 2010, Michigan has seen a 6 percent increase in the number of children living in high-poverty areas. That last statistic is particularly concerning when considering the 2020 census, which was a focus in this year's *Data Book*. The Foundation warns of troubling consequences for the nation's kids

with the likely undercount of about 1 million children under five in the 2020 census. About 62,000 kids in Michigan (11 percent), many of them who live in high-poverty areas, are among those who may go uncounted.

“Many kids in Michigan are already facing significant barriers, with more than 1 in 5 living in poverty. Now we’re learning that 62,000 children in our state could essentially be ignored, potentially causing less federal funds for programs the state badly needs,” said Alicia Guevara Warren, Kids Count in Michigan project director at the Michigan League for Public Policy. “This is a frightening notion, especially because children of color, children with low family income and children in immigrant families stand to suffer the most — these are the groups who are already being left behind.”

In this year’s *Data Book*, the Foundation noted that millions of young children around the country live in neighborhoods where there’s a high risk of missing kids in the count, which would short-change child well-being over the next decade by putting at risk hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funding for programs critical to family stability and opportunity. Nationally, roughly 300 federal programs use census-derived data to allocate more than \$800 billion a year. Michigan receives more than \$4 billion in federal funding annually for the top 10 programs supporting kids.

“If we don’t count children, we render their needs invisible and their futures uncertain,” said Annie E. Casey Foundation President and CEO Patrick McCarthy. “A major census undercount will result in overcrowded classrooms, shuttered Head Start programs, understaffed hospital emergency rooms and more kids without healthcare.”

Reliable data is key to creating policies that work for all Michiganders. The Michigan League for Public Policy urges communities and local governments to invest in outreach around the census to ensure that the most vulnerable communities are counted.

The League has additional recommendations.

Almost 700,000 kids in Michigan live in a family where no parent has full-time unemployment; despite an improvement in employment rates, many residents are working in seasonal and part-time positions to make ends meet. The state ranks 38th in this measure of child well-being.

“Child poverty should be a major concern for the state, and the solution means looking at parents *and* their kids with a two-generation approach as well as addressing racial and ethnic disparities,” said Guevara Warren. “Michigan legislators should pursue a two-generation policy strategy that would better help families thrive. This approach should include affordable childcare, equitable workplace policies, higher wages and investment in adult education.”

The League also recommends improving access and quality of prenatal care, ensuring access to affordable, quality child care by raising eligibility levels for state child care subsidies, and restoring the state Earned Income Tax Credit to 20 percent of the federal credit.

Supplementing the Casey Foundation’s look at nationwide data through the *2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is the annual Kids Count in Michigan Data Book from the Michigan League for Public Policy. The 2018 Michigan Data Book has state-level and county-by-county data and rankings. The two reports work in concert to annually illustrate where child well-being stands in the nation, in Michigan and in each

county.

Release Information

The *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 27 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

About the Kids Count in Michigan Project

The Kids Count in Michigan project is part of a broad national effort to improve conditions for children and their families. Funding for the project is provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, the Skillman Foundation, Steelcase Foundation, Michigan Education Association, American Federation of Teachers Michigan, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, United Way for Southeastern Michigan, DTE Energy Foundation, Ford Motor Company Fund and the Battle Creek Community Foundation.

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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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