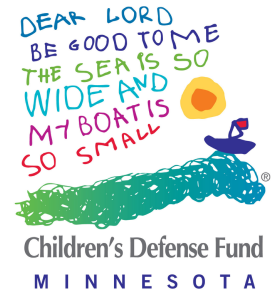


UNDER EMBARGO until Wednesday, June 27 at 12:01 a.m. ET

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Minnesota Ranks 4th in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being
Addressing chronic disparities in outcomes for children of color remains high priority



ST. PAUL, Minnesota — Minnesota yet again ranks among the top states when assessing children's outcomes related to health, education, safety and economic stability, according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. But that ranking only tells part of the story. While white children's outcomes remain strong, disparities continue to adversely impact children of color and American Indian children, compared to their white peers. Strong investments in family support programs that serve to improve child care quality and affordability, as well as economic security, will help promote greater equity for all of Minnesota's children.

"We know that children, families and communities benefit from strong investments in early childhood education and health care access, but resources must be distributed equitably to counteract historic structural and institutional policies that block access for people of color and American Indian people," said Bharti Wahi, executive director of Children's Defense Fund—Minnesota. "Directing resources to address barriers to economic stability and access to quality education and health care are vital to ensuring that Minnesota's future generations thrive."

This year, *KIDS COUNT Data Book* ranks Minnesota fourth overall, measured by a set of 16 indicators that provide an assessment of child well-being across four domains: health, education, economic well-being and family and community. Following are Minnesota's ranking in the four domains:

- **Fifth in economic well-being.** On a positive note, there has been a significant decline in families spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing, down 35 percent from 2010.
- **Fifth in the family and community domain.** Notably, Minnesota has seen a 43 percent drop in teen birth rates since 2010.
- **Sixth in health.** While the overall rate of uninsured children has declined significantly since the Affordable Care Act was passed, the rate of uninsured Latino and American Indian children remains higher than that of their white and African American peers.
- **Eleventh in education.** We continue to see deficiencies in reading proficiency, with 61 percent of fourth graders below grade level. The percentage of children ages 3 and 4 who are not in school remains high at 55 percent.

Many of the indicators used in *KIDS COUNT* for measuring child outcomes rely on accurate Census data, and funding decisions made in the public and private sectors use information gained from Census results.

"As we lead up to the 2020 Census, we recognize the critical importance of a strong response rate for all who live in our state to ensure that Minnesota continues to have a robust representation in Congress and sufficient federal funding for many programs that benefit children and families," said Wahi. She underscored the importance of the Child Care Assistance Program and culturally relevant early childhood and K-12 education and support services, among the many tools state decision-makers could use to increase opportunities and reduce systemic barriers to success. She also pointed to targeted tax credits for working families and work-family supports, such as paid family and medical leave, a benefit to which workers of color are less likely to have access.

In 2017, the Minnesota legislature passed some promising child-focused policies into law, including

family-friendly reforms to the Child Care Assistance Program, a critical resource that serves predominantly children of color and American Indian children. More recently, the primary wins for children and families during the 2018 legislative session that ended in May were the successful defeat of harmful policy proposals, like stringent work verification requirements for Medicaid recipients, rather than the passage of policies and investments that would help children and families thrive. Provisions that would have benefitted children and families, such as the additional federally required changes to Child Care Assistance, enjoyed bipartisan support but were included in the larger and more controversial budget bill that Governor Dayton vetoed.

“Minnesota cannot be content with a high ranking that masks chronic inequities for children of color and American Indian children in our state,” Wahi said. “Lawmakers must make priority investments in programs and policies that promote racial and economic equity.”

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 Children’s Defense Fund-Minnesota

Children’s Defense Fund-MN releases an annual state KIDS COUNT Data Book every fall. [Download the 2017 Minnesota KIDS COUNT Data Book here](#). The Children’s Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

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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