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Press Release

Family and Community Trust

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POTENTIAL 2020 CENSUS UNDERCOUNT COULD AFFECT CHILD WELLBEING IN MISSOURI

JEFFERSON CITY, Missouri (June 27, 2018) — The Annie E. Casey Foundation has released the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, its annual look at child well-being in the United States. The *Data Book* looks at trends across 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains: economic, education, health, and family and community. This year's *Data Book* typically compares trends between 2010 and 2016.

However, this year's Casey Foundation report highlights a serious concern on the horizon, an undercount of children in the 2020 decennial census. Since 1790, the decennial census has counted people, not just citizens. Decennial census counts are the basis for the distribution of federal resources to states, affecting funding for education, health care, and infrastructure. More essentially, the decennial census determines political representation at the federal level as well as within state and local districts. The quality of this decennial census will inform public policy decisions at all levels of public policy until the 2030s.

"The decennial census, which this report highlights, will be the focus of attention in the months ahead to help Missourians understand what it means for us. The results of the census have implications for Missouri that not everyone understands. We will do everything we can to inform that process." stated Bill Dent, Executive Director, Family and Community Trust.

In Missouri, 39,000 or 10 percent of the state's children under age 5 are living in hard-to-count census tracts. Reasons for the anticipated undercount include challenges to census outreach efforts due to limited resources, the first ever-digital survey, and the potential of suppressed participation due to a question regarding citizenship status, which has not been asked since 1950.



“If we don’t count children, we render their needs invisible and their futures uncertain,” said 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 health care.”

An undercount could mean a step back in the progress that has occurred for Missouri’s children. Current indicators show improvements in nearly all of the outcome indicators, with the exception of Missouri seeing a slight increase in the incidence of low birthweight infants.

“Children living in poor households and communities, children of color, and children living in rural areas are at greatest risk of not being counted.” said Tracy Greever-Rice, Missouri KIDS COUNT Program Director. “The impacts of undercounts are both tangible and ongoing.”

The following are a few areas of progress reported in Missouri’s data. Missouri ranked 26th overall among the states in this year’s report.

- Consistent with a national trend, 10 percent fewer Missouri children are living in poverty than were in 2010.
- The percent of Missouri teens neither attending school nor working decreased 44 percent between 2010 and 2016 from nine to five percent.
- In the 2015-2016 school year, only 11 percent of Missouri students did not graduate from high school on-time, an improvement from the 2010-2011 school year during which nearly 20 percent of students did not graduate with the cohort they started ninth grade with.
- One hundred forty thousand Missouri children, roughly 10 percent, live in families with a head of household that has not completed a high school degree, an important predictor of both family and neighborhood stability, compared to 164,000 (12 percent) in 2010.
- The percent of Missouri’s children without health insurance decreased from six percent to four percent between 2010 and 2016 — from approximately 90,000 to 62,000 kids. However, Missouri has actually fallen behind on this indicator relative to other states, which have covered a greater percent of their child population.

Despite gains for Missouri’s children, much progress still needs to be made. Where children live and the quality of resources in their local communities continue to



have a major impact on their opportunity and well-being. Missouri's non-white children continue to face challenges grounded in exposure to persistent income inequality and low-resource neighborhoods and communities. Generally, children in Missouri's most rural and most urban communities face the greatest challenges. By sharing the national and state *Data Book* information, our communities are better educated about the needs of their children and where best to focus their efforts.

"Missouri continues to fall into the middle of the pack for child well-being, which means we still have work to do. Our role now is to dig into the report and connect with our many constituencies through our statewide network of Community Partnerships, as well as our advocacy, clinical, and research partners, to continue to support meaningful strategies for children and families in our state," said Dent.

This is the Family and Community Trust's (FACT) fifth year serving as Missouri's KIDS COUNT affiliate. FACT is the state level, private/public organization that governs a network of 20 Community Partnerships focused on achieving better results for children and families. FACT's KIDS COUNT initiative focuses on child well-being in Missouri. To read data informed stories and access specific data and information about the well-being of children in our state visit mokidscount.org.

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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