

## Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being Show Pennsylvania at 18<sup>th</sup> *Data Indicates Greater Investments Needed in Public Education*

**HARRISBURG, Pa., June 13, 2017** – The latest report from one of the most comprehensive national reviews of child well-being shows Pennsylvania with gains in economic well-being for children and families, but poor performance in education.

The *2017 KIDS COUNT<sup>®</sup> Data Book*, issued today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, ranks Pennsylvania ranks 18<sup>th</sup> in the country for overall child well-being. The *Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state within four domains—health, education, economic well-being and family and community—that represent what children need most to thrive.

“Pennsylvania made some improvement in the economic well-being of kids, but overall these data show that failing to invest in children has consequences,” said **Joan Benso**, president and CEO of the Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC). “For Pennsylvania to increase its national ranking for education, we need increased state investments in Pre-K, coupled with increased state support in basic education funding, so that all students have a chance to succeed.”

According to the *Data Book*, Pennsylvania now ranks:

- **11<sup>th</sup> in education:** The education domain looks at early education opportunities, reading and math proficiency, and whether high school students graduate on time. A majority of fourth graders in the state (59 percent) scored below proficient in reading and nearly two out of three students in eighth grade (64 percent) were not proficient in math. The state also saw an 8 percent jump in 3- and 4-year-olds not attending school from 2010 to 2015.
- **15<sup>th</sup> in health:** The health domain looks at the percentage of children who lack health insurance, child and teen death rates, low-birth weight babies, and alcohol or drug abuse among teens. A bright spot for the state is a continued reduction in the children lacking health insurance, which fell 20 percent from 2010 to 2015. Nearly 1.4 million children in Pennsylvania have access to affordable, quality health care coverage through Medicaid and CHIP, allowing the state to reach an all-time low of only 4 percent of children lacking health insurance.
- **20<sup>th</sup> in economic well-being:** The economic well-being domain examines data related to child poverty, family employment, housing costs and whether older teens not in school are working. Pennsylvania has made some economic gains for its children as the state economy continues to recover from the Great Recession. However, child poverty has remained

stagnant and the state is failing to adequately invest in early learning programs and public education.

- **25<sup>th</sup> in the family and community domain:** This domain examines the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas, single-parent households and education levels among heads of households, as well as teen birth rates. The state saw a significant drop in the teen birth rate of 33 percent over a five-year period. However, there has been a rise in children living in high-poverty neighborhoods.

“If we want to build a brighter future for our children, we must provide a solid foundation for learning, a public education system that helps them meet state standards and support programs and services that help keep children healthy and protect them from abuse and neglect,” Benso added. “Investing in critical programs and services now will result in better social and economic outcomes down the road.”

### **Release Information**

The *2017 KIDS COUNT 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 [www.aecf.org/databook](http://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](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

###

### **About Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children**

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC) is a strong, effective and trusted voice to improve the health, education and well-being of children and youth in the commonwealth. Since 1992 our public policy victories have helped countless children learn, thrive and succeed, regardless of circumstances. PPC is statewide, independent, non-partisan and non-profit.

### **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. KIDS COUNT<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

CONTACT: Carolyn Myers, 717-236-5680 or [cmyers@papartnerships.org](mailto:cmyers@papartnerships.org)