

## CHILDREN NOW

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

Contact: Maria Mejia | [mmejia@childrennow.org](mailto:mmejia@childrennow.org) | (510) 763-2444 ext. 108

### **Undercount of California's Young Children Would Threaten Recent Gains in Child Well-Being**

*High risk of census undercount can render children and their needs invisible — and the state's collective future uncertain*

**OAKLAND**—With 30 percent of California's young children living in hard-to-count areas, there is a high risk of an undercount of kids in the 2020 census, according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The undercount of children would jeopardize federally funded supports that drive youth success in California.

An accurate count is crucial to ensure federal funding is properly allocated for programs that provide critical assistance to young children and their families, particularly those with low incomes. With an estimated undercount of 750,000 children in the census, California has a lot to lose in federal funding support for programs and services to ensure that these kids can thrive. These programs include Title I grants for education, special education, the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, Title IV-E Foster Care, Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Head Start and Early Head Start.

“Policymakers must ensure the 2020 census counts all children in California,” said Children Now President Ted Lempert. “An accurate count will lead to stronger federal funding, political representation and programs, like Head Start, that support the continued healthy development of kids and their families.”

California is showing small improvements in children's well-being, but any cuts to funding could cause a backslide. The state ranks 36<sup>th</sup> in the nation in this year's *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, which uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains as an assessment of child well-being: health, education, economic well-being, and family and community.

California ranks:

- **45th in economic well-being.** Thanks to California's improved economy, we have seen a slight drop in the child poverty rate, but still have the highest rate in the nation for cost of living with 44 percent of children living in households that spend more than 30 percent of their income in housing.
- **36th in education.** Statewide we have made modest gains in improving education outcomes for our kids since 2009. However, at 69 percent we still have a high percentage of 4<sup>th</sup> graders below proficient reading level. The majority of our 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 71 percent, are not proficient in math. Further improvements in educational performance

are depending on continued effective implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula and updated English, math, and science standards.

- **41st in the family and community domain.** Rising housing costs have compounded the child poverty rate, with 15 percent of children living in high-poverty areas. On the bright side, teen birth rates have seen a decline from 32 births per 1,000 girls in 2009 to 17 births in 2016.
- **9th in health.** The one bright spot is our health rank. We have made incredible progress toward ensuring affordable health coverage for every child, with nearly all California kids covered today thanks to the expansion of comprehensive Medi-Cal coverage to all income-eligible children regardless of immigration status.

“California has a long way to go to improve child well-being. Our rankings are bleak considering we pride ourselves on being innovative and having one of the world’s largest economies. We cannot risk backsliding on these indicators,” Lempert said. “An accurate census count is vital to our kids’ — and our — collective futures.”

### **Release Information**

The *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 27 at 12:01 a.m. EDT (June 26 at 9:01 p.m. PDT) at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://www.aecf.org/databook), and 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 Children Now**

Children Now is a nonpartisan, multi-issue research, policy development and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting children's health and education in California. The organization also leads The Children's Movement of California, a network of more than 2,500 direct service, parent, civil rights, faith-based and community groups dedicated to improving children's well-being. Learn more about us at [www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.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](http://www.aecf.org). *KIDS COUNT®* is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.