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

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### **Hawai'i Ranks 24<sup>th</sup> in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being**

2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book shows that despite improvements in education, greater investments are needed

HONOLULU (June 27, 2018) — Hawai'i falls in the middle range on overall child well-being, ranking 24<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states according to the 2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The Data Book — which examines trends in child well-being across areas that represent what children need most to thrive — found that while there have been some gains on education measures, Hawai'i still falls behind in the education domain, ranking 37<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states.

“Reading and math proficiency rates have seen improvements over the past decade,” said **Ivette Rodriguez Stern**, the Hawai'i KIDS COUNT project director at the University of Hawai'i Center on the Family. “But our proficiency rates are still below the national average and Hawai'i has hovered in the bottom third in the country when it comes to education for a good part of the decade. This signals a need for greater investments in our public education if we're going to work toward greater improvements.”

Looking to address the lack of adequate funding for public education in Hawai'i, the 2018 Hawai'i State Legislature passed a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow the state to tax investment property in order to increase funding for public education. While the majority of other states rely heavily on property taxes to fund public education, Hawai'i currently funds it at the state level from the general fund. The constitutional amendment will be put to Hawai'i voters in the November ballot.

“As one of the lowest-rated school districts for spending per student, Hawai'i needs to find new ways to increase funding for education,” said **Deborah Zysman**, executive director of the Hawaii Children's Action Network, which advocates for policies that support child well-being. “If approved by voters, this amendment will provide an option to increase funding without increasing the tax burden on Hawai'i residents. This additional funding for education can lead to better results in test scores, school completion, college attendance and job opportunities later in life for our keiki.”

The annual *Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains – education, economic well-being, health and family and community. Findings in the other domains include:

- Hawai'i has seen improvement in almost all indicators of **economic well-being** over the post recession years, including the percentage of children in poverty, children whose parents lack secure employment, and children in households with a high housing cost burden. However, Hawai'i continues to have one of the worst housing cost burden rates in the nation, ranking 48<sup>th</sup> on the housing indicator, and ranking 30<sup>th</sup> in the economic well-being domain.
- Hawai'i continues to do well in the **health** domain, ranking 13<sup>th</sup> in the nation. Hawai'i has among the smallest share of children without health insurance (2 percent), tying for second in the nation on this indicator.
- Hawai'i is also doing well in the area of **family and community**, ranking 12<sup>th</sup> in this domain. There were no significant changes in the percentage of children in single-parent families, in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma, and living in high-poverty areas over the past decade. However, following the national trend, the teen birth rate in Hawai'i has continued its impressive decline and is down 42 percent from 2010.

This year's *Data Book* also calls attention to the roughly 4.5 million young children in the United States who live in neighborhoods where there is a high risk of failing to count kids in the 2020 census. An undercount of young children in the upcoming decennial census would short-change child well-being over the next decade by putting at risk hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funding for programs that are critical to family stability and opportunity. Based on census data, Hawai'i receives more than \$630 million annually in federal funding for programs that impact children.

"Roughly 39 percent of our young children under five are living in hard-to-count census tracts in Hawai'i," said **Barbara DeBaryshe**, interim director of the Center on the Family. "When kids aren't counted, state and local infrastructures face losing critical funding for programs like Head Start, child care subsidies, SNAP and school lunches."

An inaccurate 2020 census will also adversely affect research and advocacy efforts that use data to identify and analyze problems, document disparities, develop policy solutions and evaluate the efficacy of programs for years to come. "We hope to partner with child advocates and other local stakeholders to explore ways of ensuring that all of Hawai'i's kids are counted," said Stern.

The Foundation offers the following recommendations to achieve a more accurate census:

- maximize the U.S. Census Bureau's capacity by fully funding census outreach efforts and appointing a qualified and permanent director to lead the agency;
- have state and local governments and community organizations invest in educational outreach to ensure the most vulnerable communities are counted;
- broaden the circle of messengers (from child care providers to members of the clergy) and organizations (from public schools to libraries) who can provide outreach in their communities;
- address the digital divide by providing all families online access either in local libraries or schools; and

- address privacy and confidentiality concerns.

### **Release Information**

The 2018 KIDS COUNT® *Data Book* will be available June 27 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 the University of Hawai'i Center on the Family**

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa serves approximately 20,000 students pursuing more than 225 different degrees. Coming from every Hawaiian island, every state in the nation, and more than 100 countries, UH Mānoa students thrive in an enriching environment for the global exchange of ideas. For more information, visit <http://manoa.hawaii.edu> and <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/media/>. The Center on the Family is a unit within the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. The Center serves as the KIDS COUNT grantee in Hawai'i. Its mission is to enhance the well-being of Hawai'i's families through interdisciplinary research, education and community outreach. For more information about the Center, visit [www.uhfamily.hawaii.edu](http://www.uhfamily.hawaii.edu).

### **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.

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