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Urgency Needed to Ensure All Oregon Kids are Counted in 2020 Census

Possible Census Undercount Threatens to Deepen Disparities Faced by Children

PORTLAND, Oregon — With 12 percent of Oregon kids at risk of being missed in the upcoming 2020 census, federal programs that support child well-being and address disparities are in jeopardy, according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Oregon's national ranking of 30th in overall child well-being indicates upward trends, particularly in economic, health, and family and community indicators. The child poverty rate has improved more quickly in Oregon than the U.S. as a whole, declining 23 percent between 2010 and 2016. Oregon continued to lead the majority of states in children's health care coverage, with only 3 percent of children lacking health insurance in 2016. However, although Oregon has made slight improvements in education, the state once again ranked 48th in the nation in high school graduation, with a quarter of high school students not graduating on time. Additionally, the state continues to lag behind much of the country in enrolling young children in early education programs.

"Not all children are feeling the benefits of Oregon's progress in overall child well-being," said Tonia Hunt, executive director of Children First for Oregon. "Systemic barriers and inequities both past and present have left us with an uneven playing field. These gains are overshadowed by deep disparities that persist for children of color, low-income children, children in immigrant families and children in rural communities."

A deeper look reveals that some children have benefitted from Oregon's improvements more than others. While Oregon's overall child poverty rate dropped in 2016, Latino children were more than twice as likely to live in poverty than white children. Oregon's gains in children's health insurance coverage were not felt equally across the state, with rural communities facing significant barriers in access to health care coverage. Many children of color continued to suffer the most from Oregon's low graduation rate, with only 56 percent of Non-Hispanic American Indian students and 66 percent of black students graduating on time, compared to Oregon's already low rate of 75 percent of all students during the 2015-2016 school year.

Census outreach efforts face daunting challenges, with children in underserved communities most at risk of being undercounted. These same children also stand to suffer the most in the event that vital programs face reductions in funding. More than \$2 billion in federal funds are

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allocated each year to programs in Oregon such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Head Start using census-derived data. An inaccurate census could put these funds — and the essential resources they provide for communities — at risk.

“These data should prompt urgency from policymakers and communities to do right by our kids,” said Hunt. “Children lack political power and representation. It’s up to all of us to ensure all kids are counted and considered national and state priorities.”

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — as an assessment of child well-being. Oregon ranks:

- **28th in economic well-being.** Oregon improved faster than the U.S. as a whole in all indicators, with child poverty, families with high housing cost burdens, teens not in school and not working, and parents without secure employment all declining in 2016.
- **43rd in education.** While the U.S. high school graduation rate reached an all-time high in 2016, Oregon stagnated at 48th in the nation in this indicator. About three out of five young children were not enrolled in early education programs.
- **19th in the family and community domain.** Oregon was among a handful of other states showing the fastest improvements in parental education, with only 12 percent of children living in households headed by an adult without a high school diploma.
- **16th in health.** Oregon has moved in rank from 35th in the nation in 2010 to tied for ninth in 2016 in the percentage of children without health insurance coverage. Oregon continued to do better than the nation as a whole in the number of babies born with a low birth weight.

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.

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About Children First for Oregon

Children First for Oregon (CFFO) is a statewide, nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower communities to advocate for kids so all children in Oregon can thrive. Since 1991, CFFO has worked across the state to galvanize community support for children and inform decision-makers about the solutions kids need. CFFO convenes and engages communities through four program areas: legislative solutions, foster youth advocacy, child abuse prevention and research and data. Learn more at www.cffo.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.