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Greater percentage of Michigan children living in poverty since 1990 despite marked improvement in other areas of child well-being

30th annual national KIDS COUNT® Data Book ranked Michigan second best in U.S. for children with health insurance; poverty, education remain low points

LANSING — Michigan has improved in many areas of child well-being since 1990, but the percentage of children living in poverty, kids living in high-poverty neighborhoods and low birth weight babies are worse today, according to the 30th edition of the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The *2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book* — the most comprehensive annual report on child well-being in the United States — notes measurable progress in Michigan and across the country since the first *Data Book* was published in 1990. Nevertheless, more than 13 million U.S. children — and 419,000 Michigan kids — live in poverty. Serious racial and ethnic disparities in child well-being persist nationally and in the state, with Michigan having the highest rate of concentrated poverty for African-American kids in the country for the second year in a row.

“To mark the 30th edition, this year’s national *KIDS COUNT Data Book* provides a unique opportunity to look at child well-being over three decades. We can see where Michigan has gained significant ground —and where we are still unfortunately struggling,” said Alicia Guevara Warren, *Kids Count* project director at the Michigan League for Public Policy. “Thankfully, many of the struggles facing Michigan kids in 1990 have improved significantly, but it is deplorable that amidst all that progress, policymakers have not moved the needle on child poverty over the last three decades.”

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* from the Annie E. Casey Foundation uses 16 indicators to rank each state overall and individually across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — as an assessment of child well-being. The rankings are based on the 2017 data, and looking at the related trends since 1990 provides additional context for the state’s progress or lack thereof in these areas. Michigan continues to lag behind the nation in child well-being and ranks 32nd overall nationally, the worst ranking in the Great Lakes region. In the four domains, Michigan ranks:

- **30th in economic well-being.** The percentage of children living in poverty has increased since 1990, and the proportion of families facing high housing cost burdens (25 percent) is the same

as it was 30 years ago. With one in five kids in Michigan living in poverty in 2017, the state ranks 33rd in that measure. The state is also 37th for the share of children in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment. Young children and children of color are disproportionately impacted by poverty.

- **37th in education.** While slightly improving from 1990, 68 percent of fourth-graders are still not reading proficiently, which will have severe consequences for the state in the long term and also with the retention component of Michigan's Read by Grade Three law going into effect next school year.
- **29th in the family and community domain.** The latest data show there are more children living in high-poverty neighborhoods than in 1990, with the state ranking 42nd in this measure. Children living in high-poverty neighborhoods have fewer resources available to them and are more likely to experience toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences. Michigan has the highest rate of concentrated poverty for African-American kids in the country.
- **18th in health.** The state's best rankings are in children's health, particularly due to the high rate of children with health insurance, which is the third highest in the country. However, the problem of babies born at low birth weight, which can lead to long-term developmental and health outcomes, worsened from 1990. As shown in the [state Kids Count® Data Book](#) released in April, women of color in Michigan face more barriers to prenatal care, along with outright racism, which can lead to poor birth outcomes.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows how essential accurate data are to sound policymaking. The 2010 census missed 2.2 million kids under age 5 that lived in hard-to-count areas, and the upcoming 2020 census may miss even more if young children are not a priority. The stakes are high: 55 major federal programs, including Head Start and the Children's Health Insurance Program, allocate more than \$880 billion each year based on census data. In Michigan, the 2010 census should have counted 10,172 additional children under age 5, and that undercount has cost the state \$9.7 million every year in funding lost from just five of those 55 federally funded programs for children and families.

According to the 2019 *Data Book*, Michigan was one of 12 states that experienced a decline in its child population since 1990. However, it has diversified since 1990 with more kids of color, making it a critical opportunity to address systemic racism and increase opportunities for all kids.

"America's children are one-quarter of our population and 100 percent of our future," said Casey Foundation President and CEO Lisa Hamilton. "All of the 74 million kids in our increasingly diverse country have unlimited potential, and we have the data, knowledge and evidence to create the policies that will help them realize it. It's incumbent on us to do just that."

The Casey Foundation points to areas of tremendous improvement in children's lives since 1990 — including access to health care, decreased rates of teen childbearing and increased rates of high school graduation — and draws a direct line to policies that support this success. Especially as the child population is expanding, there are steps that policymakers should take to help all children thrive. The Casey Foundation calls on elected officials and representatives to:

- *Expand the programs that make and keep kids healthy.* For the sake of all children, regardless of their immigration status, states should ensure access to public health programs and expand coverage to lawfully residing immigrant children and pregnant mothers as allowed under

Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA), which is outlined in the League's Owner's Manual. The Trump administration should abandon efforts to repeal or undermine the Affordable Care Act, and Michigan should closely monitor the adverse impact on kids and families of Healthy Michigan Plan work requirements coming next year.

- *Provide the tools proven to help families lift themselves up economically.* Federal and state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit programs mean working parents can use more of their take-home pay to meet their children's needs. Modernizing the state EITC credit could expand its reach to help more youth and other adults without children.
- *Address ethnic and racial inequities.* The national averages of child well-being can mask the reality that black and brown children still face a greater number of obstacles.
- *Count all kids.* Ensure the 2020 census counts all children, especially those under 5 years old and from hard-to-count areas.

The *2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is the 30th edition of an annual data study that is based on U.S. Census and other publicly available data, representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Release Information

The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 17 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook. 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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The Michigan League for Public Policy, www.mlpp.org, is a nonprofit policy institute focused on economic opportunity for all. It is the only state-level organization that addresses poverty in a comprehensive way.

About the Kids Count in Michigan Project: The Kids Count in Michigan project is part of a broad national effort to measure the well-being of children at the state and local levels, and use that information to shape efforts to improve the lives of children. The state project is part of a nationwide network of state projects supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation of Baltimore. Funding for the Michigan project is also provided by The Skillman Foundation, The Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, Steelcase Foundation, Michigan Education Association, American Federation of Teachers Michigan, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, United Way for Southeastern Michigan, DTE Energy Foundation, Ford Motor Company Fund, Battle Creek Community Foundation and the Ruth Mott Foundation.

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.