Michigan kids continue to struggle in latest national rankings for child well-being

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Michigan ranks high-risk on almost every child indicator since 2014, finishing in bottom 10 for education

LANSING, Mich., June 13, 2017 — Michigan is lagging in nearly every aspect of child well-being, with a particularly alarming performance in education, according to the *2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

With the state backsliding in three out of four education indicators measured by the Casey Foundation, Michigan is ranked as one of the highest-risk states in the country for education outcomes. This is just the latest evidence that shows we need to improve public policy to better support Michigan kids.

"Anyone who is concerned about the future of Michigan should take notice of this data, because our state's struggles in child well-being today will be economic, employment and budgetary problems in the future," said **Alicia Guevara Warren**, Kids Count in Michigan project director at the Michigan League for Public Policy. "While the importance of early childhood education and the need to improve third-grade reading proficiency have both received more attention lately in Lansing, the state clearly needs to take a more comprehensive approach to turn around our dismal ranking."

Overall, Michigan ranked 32nd in child well-being in the *2017 Data Book*, finishing behind all other Great Lakes states: Minnesota (4th), Wisconsin (12th), Illinois (19th), Ohio (24th) and Indiana (28th).

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 — that represent what children need most to thrive. In the *2017 Data Book*, Michigan received the following national rankings:

- **31st in economic well-being.** On par with the national average, 7 percent of 16- to 19-year-olds are not attending school or working.

- **41st in education.** Seventy-one percent of eighth graders are performing below proficiency in math and 71 percent of fourth graders are reading below proficiency.
- **29th in family and community.** Since 2009, the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas has remained unchanged at 17 percent.
- **17th in health.** A bright spot for Michigan is the percentage of children with health insurance. Just 3 percent of Michigan children lack coverage, an improvement on the national average of 5 percent.

"Michigan lawmakers are always talking about ways to make Michigan a more appealing state, but no one is going to want to stay or move here to raise a family when our kids don't have an opportunity to thrive," said **Gilda Z. Jacobs**, president and CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy. "Minnesota is consistently one of the top states in the nation in child well-being. They don't achieve that by cutting taxes — they achieve that by investing in education from pre-school to higher education and other state services that people need. That is what Michigan legislators should be looking to emulate."

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* illustrates that Michigan's so-called recovery is still not reaching many working families. Nearly half a million Michigan kids — around one in five — live in poverty. Additionally, almost 700,000 Michigan kids — roughly one-third of the state's child population — live in a family where no parent has full-time employment. While the state's unemployment rate has improved, many parents are working multiple or seasonal jobs for meager wages and are one unexpected expense away from a financial crisis.

Child poverty as a whole — as well as the 17 percent of kids living in high-poverty neighborhoods — are of concern for the state, and Michigan legislators should pursue a two-generation policy strategy that would better help kids and their parents thrive. This approach should include introducing affordable child care, equitable workplace policies, higher wages and investment in adult education.

"The U.S. continues to have one of the highest child poverty rates among all developed countries," said **Laura Speer**, associate director of policy reform and advocacy for the Annie E. Casey Foundation. "This unfairly burdens our young people and the nation, costing an estimated $500 billion a year in reduced economic opportunities and increased health and criminal justice-related costs."

To fix these problems in Michigan, the League recommends: improving access and quality of prenatal care in Michigan; ensuring access to affordable, quality child care by raising eligibility levels for state child care subsidies and reforming the current system; and restoring the state Earned Income Tax Credit to 20 percent of the federal credit.

Supplementing the Casey Foundation's look at nationwide data through the *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is the annual *Kids Count in Michigan Data Book* from the Michigan League for Public Policy. The Michigan Data Book has state-level and county-by-county data and rankings. The two reports work in concert to annually illustrate where child well-being stands in America, in Michigan and in each county.

The *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is available at www.aecf.org/resources/2017-kids-count-data-book. 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.

About the Kids Count in Michigan Project
The Kids Count in Michigan project is part of a broad national effort to improve conditions for children and their families. Funding for the project is provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, The Skillman Foundation, Steelcase Foundation, Frey 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 Fetzer Institute.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation
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