

# Michigan policies must create opportunity and remove barriers for kids of color, immigrants

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## **2017 Race for Results report shows Michigan has lowest child well-being score for African-American children in the country**

LANSING—A new national report on child well-being released today shows that African-American children in Michigan fare worse in key indicators than in any other state in the country. The report also shows that Latino children in Michigan fall behind children of other ethnic groups on key milestones. The report, *2017 Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children*, produced by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, shows that all Michigan kids are struggling academically, but children of color are doing worse in nearly all indicators across education, health, family and community, and economic security.

The report also indicates that Michigan children in immigrant families are doing relatively well, but uncertainty and outright hostility in state and federal policies continue to pose threats to their well-being and the stability of their families. Additionally, not every group of immigrants has the same experiences, with many struggling with housing, financial security, education and language barriers.

“Seeing how our kids in Michigan fare compared to national numbers is startling. We are failing all of our children, especially our kids of color, and we need policies to remove barriers that have created systemic inequities.

“Some policies like stringent immigration changes are specifically targeting certain kids, some policies are perpetuating historic racial disparities generation after generation, and some policies are just having inadvertent or unintended consequences. If we want Michigan to be a diverse and vibrant state, we have to start doing more to better take care of all of our kids,” said Alicia Guevara Warren, Kids Count in Michigan Project Director at the Michigan League for Public Policy.

This is the second *Race for Results* report by the Casey Foundation; the Foundation released the [first report](#) in 2014. The report measures children’s progress on the national and state levels on key education, health and economic milestones by racial and ethnic groups. The

report's index uses a composite score of these milestones on a scale of one (lowest) to 1,000 (highest) to make comparisons.

The 2017 *Race for Results* shows that Michigan's overall index score for White children, 667, is lower than the national average of 713, and the state score of 260 for African-American children is the lowest score in the country—far below the national average of 369 for this group. However, Michigan's scores for other ethnic groups were higher than the national average. The well-being of American Indian/Alaska Native children in Michigan was scored at 511 compared to 413 nationally, and Asian and Pacific Islander kids in the state scored 804 overall compared to 783 nationally. The report scored the welfare of Michigan's Latino children at 446, while nationally this group's score was 429. The index scores for Latino children across the country are alarming, with the vast majority, including Michigan's, below 500.

"Michigan is not the best state for meeting the needs of African-American kids," said Alice Thompson, CEO of Black Family Development, Inc. "At a time when racial tensions are running high in our nation, our government and our society are letting these kids down and leaving them behind. 'Separate but equal' was a foolish and flawed policy, but so is 'Together but inequitable.' We need to help all kids move up together, and we're going to need an overhaul of our policy approach to do that."

Regionally, Michigan had the second lowest score for White kids in the Midwest. The lowest score in the Midwest for White children was Indiana with a score of 664, while Minnesota had the highest at 789—the fifth highest score in the country.

The academic indicators continue to be some of the lowest and most distressing for Michigan. The percentage of fourth-graders proficient in reading is lower in all racial and ethnic groups in Michigan than the national average for each group. The starkest difference is among African-American fourth-graders in Michigan, where nine percent are proficient in reading compared to the national average of 18 percent. This is the lowest rate of any state. White and Latino kids in Michigan fall into the bottom five states nationally for the rate of fourth-grade reading proficiency. Similar struggles are seen for all racial and ethnic groups in eighth-grade math, and the math proficiency rate for African-American eighth-graders in Michigan is tied with Alabama for the worst in the country.

"As we work to help Latino children in Michigan thrive, we need to take a broader, two-generation approach to better support their parents," said Angela G. Reyes, Executive Director and Founder of the Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation. "Over a quarter of our Latino kids live with a householder without at least a high school diploma, and their parents' struggles to finish school affect their own reading proficiency and ability to learn."

Around 284,000 immigrant kids currently live in Michigan. Some children face the same struggles, whether they were born in the United States or abroad. More than 20 percent of children in immigrant families live with a householder without at least a high school diploma compared to only eight percent of children in U.S.-born families. More than 25 percent of

Latino children in Michigan live with a householder without at least a high school diploma. Conversely, all the other U.S.-born racial and ethnic groups have rates between nine and 15 percent.

“Not all immigrants are the same, and our experiences are as varied as the countries and cultures we come from,” said Aamina Ahmed, Executive Director of Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote – Michigan. “Gov. Rick Snyder is trying to bring more immigrants to Michigan, President Donald Trump is trying to keep more immigrants out of the country, and policy approaches to immigration sway with the political winds. Immigrants come here in search of a brighter future, but right now, that search is clouded with fear and uncertainty, leaving them very vulnerable.”

Other indicators showed some significant differences in family structure. Eighty-seven percent of children in Michigan’s immigrant families live in two-parent households, a significantly higher rate than the 66 percent of children in U.S.-born families. Michigan immigrant kids are in the top five nationally in this category. Only 69 percent of all children in Michigan live in two-parent families (just above the national average of 68 percent), ranging from a low for African-American children of 33 percent to a high of 89 percent for Asian and Pacific Islander kids.

While this data is eye-opening, it also raises questions about how policies are affecting children of color and in immigrant families. Michigan policymakers in Lansing and Washington should embrace the following policy recommendations to address the low scores for child well-being and drastic racial disparities for kids of color identified in this report:

- Use a racial and ethnic equity lens in evaluating and developing public policies, like the Raise the Age effort to keep kids out of adult prisons;
- Keep families together and in their communities;
- Increase economic opportunity for all parents, especially immigrants and people of color; and
- Provide a quality education to help all children meet key developmental measures.

The Michigan League for Public Policy continues to make racial equity a focal point of all of our policy work, recently analyzing the [state budget’s impact on Michigan kids and residents of color](#). The League also strives to lift up the contributions of immigrants and their families to our state at a time when they are coming under severe attack from policies out of Lansing and Washington. A new report, *Immigrant Families in Michigan: A State Profile*, analyzes Michigan’s immigrant population and the positive impacts they have on our economy and labor force. The League has also compiled [immigration profiles](#) for all 83 Michigan counties in conjunction with the *Race for Results* release.

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## Release Information

The 2017 Race for Results report is available at [www.aecf.org/raceforresults](http://www.aecf.org/raceforresults). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). The website also contains the most recent national, state and local data on numerous indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about Race for Results can use the Data Center at [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://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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