**For Immediate Release**

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**ORGANIZATION comments on 2018 Kids Count book, child well-being in LOCATION**

LOCATION—The following statement was released by (Name, Title and Organization) in response to the *2018 Kids Count in Michigan Data Book* released today by the Michigan League for Public Policy.

“For more than 25 years, the Michigan League for Public Policy has been producing the annual *Kids Count Data Book* to provide data, analysis and policy recommendations on child well-being for kids in LOCATION and around the state. The *2018 Kids Count in Michigan Data Book* released today shows that despite our state’s slow economic recovery, too many kids and families are still not feeling any relief and Michigan’s child well-being is ranked in the bottom half nationally. Many of these same indicators are problematic locally.

“There are too many divides in our state, whether geographic, economic or racial and ethnic. In light of our current political climate and the upcoming election year, Michigan kids need a strong voice now more than ever to remedy these disparities and fix the policies, institutions and systems that are perpetuating them. If we are to truly improve outcomes for all kids in LOCATION and Michigan, then policies must be crafted at the local, state and federal level to truly achieve equity.

“More than 20 percent of Michigan children live in poverty, including XX percent in COUNTY. These numbers are even higher for kids of color and children living in rural communities. We need to provide supports for working parents to find and keep a job like child care and public transportation, invest in education and training to help them earn a better wage and pursue a more stable career, and support working families with the Earned Income Tax Credit and other pro-work, anti-poverty policies.

“We clearly need greater state investment in programs and services to improve maternal and child health, including efforts to reduce the high number of pregnant women who are smoking. In addition, more than 32 percent of births in Michigan are to mothers who received less than adequate prenatal care. In LOCATION, XX percent of births are to women who received less than adequate prenatal care, showing it’s a concern locally as well as statewide. Promoting and investing in programs, such as home visitation, are important to help support families.

“The struggles of Michigan kids in school are particularly concerning. More than 65 percent of high school juniors in the state are not college ready, including XX percent in COUNTY, and more than half of 3- and 4-year-olds are not in preschool. We need to work to get more children in preschool, improve third-grade reading and invest more money in schools that have the most students in need of support. All of our communities are dependent on our kids thriving. But state policies coming out of Lansing and Washington are making that harder and harder. Organizations like the League, advocates like us, and local parents and kids need to share their concerns with policymakers, and the Kids Count Data Book is an essential tool to do that.

“There are some bright spots in the data as well, including reductions in infant mortality,declines in child/teen deaths, a significant decrease in births to teens, a decrease in the number of high school students not graduating on time, and a reduction in the number of kids in out-of-home care due to abuse or neglect. We need to build on these positives and work to address the major challenges our kids are still facing.”

“When it comes to the well-being of kids in Michigan, the racial and ethnic disparities that exist are unacceptable. Children of color are more likely to experience poverty, more likely to die young, overrepresented in the share of children who are victims of abuse and neglect, more likely to attend underresourced schools and less likely to meet college readiness benchmarks. To overcome these disparities, we must demand that a racial equity lens is used when policies and budgets are developed in Michigan.

“Michigan is one of just five states that automatically treats 17-year-old children as adults in the criminal justice system. This impacts not only kids, but their families and communities. Incarcerated 17-year-olds lose 5.5 months of education when they are sent to adult facilities, and they are more likely to reoffend when exiting the system than their peers who are placed in juvenile facilities. Youth of color are overrepresented in the number of 17-year-olds entering the state’s adult criminal justice system, which has led to less opportunity throughout communities of color. The Kids Count book makes clear that Michigan must raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18.”

For additional information, visit <http://www.mlpp.org/kids-count/michigan-2/2018-kids-count-in-michigan-data-book>.

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