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Massachusetts Ranked 2nd in Nation for Child Well-Being; Many Difficult Challenges Persist

2016 KIDS COUNT Data Book finds MA youth lead in education and health; many struggle economically

BOSTON- Children in Massachusetts lead the nation in educational achievement and also rank highly in health measures, but more than one in seven live in poverty, according to the 2016 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The annual report measures child well-being state-by-state across four categories: health, education, economic well-being and family and community.

"This year's *Data Book* contains significant good news for Massachusetts, but no reasons for complacency. To create a Commonwealth where all of our children have the opportunity to reach their full potential, we need great schools in all of our communities and a holistic approach to helping our children overcome whatever obstacles they face," said Noah Berger, president of MassBudget, which is also home to the Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT in Massachusetts. "The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows that Massachusetts has made much more progress towards this goal than most other states - but there is still a long way to go."

The *Data Book* tracks reading proficiency in fourth grade and math in eighth grade. Massachusetts students lead the nation in both measures, with 50 percent of our students proficient in reading and 51 percent in math. But while the data show that Massachusetts leads the nation, the report also shows that half of our students are not achieving these goals. There are similar mixed messages for other education measures: 12 percent of our students do not graduate high school on time - that's too many, but down from 18 percent in 2008.

Education is not the only tool states have to make life better for children. New Jersey, Rhode Island, California and New York provide parents and other workers with statewide insurance-style programs for paid family and medical leave. Research shows that when parents can take time to bond with and care for a new child that can have long term positive effects.

Continued Berger, "One way we can make life better for kids is by making it easier for working parents to bond with a new baby or care for an ill family member. Several states now have Paid Family Medical Leave Laws to do just that. Massachusetts could join them."

While Massachusetts ranks at the top in educational attainment and near the top in child health, on measures of family economic well-being it ranks 11th. Raising the incomes of low and middle income families remains an important challenge for our Commonwealth.

"We need to ask ourselves: what can we do to make sure that every child has the best opportunity to thrive?" said Michael Curry, chair of the KIDS COUNT Advisory Council and President of the Boston NAACP. "We can thank past policy choices and investments for our continued high ranking. But even

so, there are still many children and families in Massachusetts who face difficult challenges and we need to ensure opportunity for all our kids."

You can see all of MassBudget's KIDS COUNT Resources [HERE](#).

MassBudget is home to KIDS COUNT in Massachusetts, a national and state-by-state effort funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track and improve the well-being of children across the United States. The Massachusetts KIDS COUNT Advisory Council brings together leaders who work to make life better for all children in Massachusetts.

You can read MassBudget's recent fact sheets on Paid Family and Medical Leave, including how the program differs from similar programs ([HERE](#)), how such programs impact businesses and families in other states ([HERE](#)), how Massachusetts residents currently cope without paid leave ([HERE](#)), and answers to frequently asked questions ([HERE](#)).

For more information on evidence-based strategies to support children from pre-Kindergarten through high school, see [Roadmap to Expanding Opportunity](#).

The 2016 *Data Book* will be available June 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices.

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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, visit www.aecf.org.

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The Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center (MassBudget) produces policy research, analysis, and data-driven recommendations focused on improving the lives of low- and middle-income children and adults, strengthening our state's economy, and enhancing the quality of life in Massachusetts.

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