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Maryland Ranks 16th in Latest National Rankings for Overall Child Well-Being

Greater Investment Needed in Children's Health

Baltimore, Md., June 13, 2017 — With bright spots in education and the economic well-being of children and their families, Maryland is ranked 16th for overall child well-being, according to the *2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. However, the state needs to make more investments in health to ensure greater gains for kids.

In health, Maryland experienced a slight drop in the percentage of low birthweight babies from 2010 to 2015. A stagnation in the percentage of youth abusing drugs and alcohol, and a spike in the rate of child and teen deaths contributed to the state's drop in the health rank from 22 to 30 in the time since last year's *Data Book* was released. The health data of the state's children is worrisome.

"Mortality rates of children and youth are still a challenge," said Nonso Umunna, research director at Advocates for Children and Youth. "More research needs to be done to identify the causes of premature death among our children such as opioid addiction, lack of prenatal care or other causes that we have not considered."

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. The *Data Book* measures each aspect of child well-being over a five-year period from 2010 to 2015 and year to year.

According to the *Data Book*, Maryland ranks:

- **12th in education.** This domain examines the percentage of children ages 3 and 4 not attending school; fourth graders not proficient in reading; eighth graders not proficient in math; and high school students not graduating on time. In the 2014-15 school year, only 13 percent of Maryland's high schoolers did not graduate on time, a positive sign in light of the national level of 17 percent.
- **15th in economic well-being.** The economic well-being domain examines data related to child poverty, family employment, housing costs and whether older teens not in school are working. In Maryland, teens not in school and not working dropped 13 percent since 2010.
- **20th in the family and community domain.** This domain examines the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas, single-parent households and education levels among heads of households, as well as teen birth rates. Maryland has seen a decline of nearly 40 percent in the teen birth rate since 2010.
- **30th in health.** The health domain looks at the percentage of children who lack health insurance, child and teen death rates, low-birthweight babies and alcohol or drug abuse among teens. While the percentage of children lacking health insurance has dropped 20 percent since 2010, it rose from 2014 to 2015.



The *2017 Data Book* shows that in recent years, government policies have helped drive positive outcomes for children and families nationwide. An historic high of 95 percent of U.S. children now have health insurance, due to the combination of key provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), expansions to Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

"As policymakers search for ideas to expand the economy and bring economic opportunity to families, I urge them not to abandon targeted public investments that are helping more people lift themselves out of poverty and gain access to health care," said Annie E. Casey Foundation President and CEO Patrick McCarthy.

Umunna agreed: "There should never be a debate about the well-being of children as they are the measure of how well a society is doing. Once we start to chip away at the very programs that ensure that we are a healthy county, state or nation, we put our future — which is in the lives of our children — in jeopardy."

Release Information

The *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available June 13 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. 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.

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About Advocates for Children and Youth

Advocates for Children and Youth improves the lives and experiences of Maryland's children through policy change and program improvement.

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. KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.