



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Media Contact: Claire Berkowitz | 207.623.1868 x 208 | [cberk@mekids.org](mailto:cberk@mekids.org)

---

### **Maine Ranks 13<sup>th</sup> in Latest National Rankings for Child Well-Being**

*New report shows federal and local policies are leading to improvements for U.S. children, but Maine is not seeing the same results as other New England states*

AUGUSTA, Maine, June 13, 2017 — Maine children are experiencing modest improvements in key areas of child well-being that support them in leading healthier, safer lives, but a report released today by [the Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) shows that there is still a long way to go compared to other states in the New England region. While fewer Maine children are living in poverty, too many still face severe economic challenges that could be prevented with smart policies, according to the *2017 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*.

This year, Maine ranked 13<sup>th</sup> overall, while New Hampshire took the number one spot, followed by Massachusetts and Vermont. The *2017 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 four domains, Maine ranked:

- **27<sup>th</sup> in economic well-being.** The economic well-being domain examines data related to child poverty, family employment, housing costs and whether older teens are connected to education or employment. The data shows that 32 percent of children in Maine are in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment.
- **18<sup>th</sup> in education.** High school graduation rates continue to be a bright spot and Maine currently ranks 12<sup>th</sup> on this indicator. However, with 13 percent of students not graduating on time, there is still work to be done.
- **6<sup>th</sup> in family and community context.** At 4 percent, Maine has one of the lowest percentages of children in families where the head of the household lacks a high-school diploma.
- **11<sup>th</sup> in health.** In stark contrast with national trends of improvement in this area, Maine has experienced a 50 percent increase in the percentage of children without health insurance since 2010. Six percent of kids now lack coverage, compared to the national average of 5 percent.

The *2017 Data Book* highlights the need to address the economic well-being of Maine kids. In 2015, 17 percent of Maine children were living in poverty — down 2 percentage points from the previous year, but still not at pre-recession rates.

“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.”

In other economic indicators, Maine has remained relatively constant. Nearly one third of children live in households where more than 30 percent of income is consumed by housing costs, or in households where parents are lacking full-time, year-round employment.

Meanwhile, Maine saw fewer young children in preschool, fewer fourth graders reading at grade level, and fewer eighth graders proficient in math. However, 87 percent of high school students graduated on time in 2014-15, a step above the national average of 83 percent.

While much of the country saw improvement in the percentage of children ages 3 and 4 attending school, Maine fell 3 percentage points between 2014 and 2015, ranking 33<sup>rd</sup> in the nation on this indicator.

“Research tells us that high-quality early childhood programs positively impact our children, communities and even the economy,” said **Rita Furlow**, senior policy analyst of the Maine Children’s Alliance. “If we are serious about investing in our kids and our future, Maine needs to invest in high-quality early childhood programs, from expanding public preschool to providing adequate funding for our head start programs.”

Similarly, Maine’s health indicators showed mixed results. While Maine saw significant improvement in the percentage of teens abusing alcohol or drugs and in the child and teen death rate, the state continues to defy national trends regarding child health insurance.

Across the country, many states are seeing vast improvements in the percentage of children living without health insurance. This is largely due to expanded public health care coverage. Unfortunately, Maine’s percentage of uninsured children increased 50 percent between 2010 and 2015 and, at 6 percent, is above the national average. More needs to be done to improve access to care, which is why the Maine Children’s Alliance is working with several other nonprofits, led by Consumers for Affordable Health Care, to connect eligible Maine children to MaineCare coverage so they can grow up in a healthy environment.

“If we want to improve child well-being in Maine, our officials must look at the evidence and make data-driven decisions for our future,” said **Claire Berkowitz**, executive director of the Maine Children’s Alliance. “We must create pathways out of poverty so more parents have access to family-supporting jobs, more young children have access to early education and all families have access to affordable health care.”

### **Release Information**

The *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available June 13 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://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](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

### **About the Maine Children’s Alliance**

The Maine Children's Alliance is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates for sound public policies and promotes best practices for Maine children, youth and families.

**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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

###