

UNDER EMBARGO until:

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CONTACT: Oliver Bernstein, 512.289.8618, bernstein@CPPP.org

Texas Ranks 41st in Latest National Rankings of Child Well-Being

National Report Shows That the Well-Being of Texas Children Lags Behind the Nation Without the Support of Sound Policies

AUSTIN, Texas, June 13, 2017 — Many Texas kids are not growing up with the support, educational opportunities or economic stability they need, according to the *2017 KIDS COUNT[®] Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Following Texas's 85th legislative session, which repeatedly prioritized politics over common-sense policies that could have broadly improved children's lives, this national report ranks Texas 41st in child well-being.

"This year's *Data Book* confirms that state leaders missed opportunity after opportunity to improve the lives of millions of children and families in our great state," said Kristie Tingle, research analyst at the Center for Public Policy Priorities in Austin. "Lawmakers need to focus between now and the next legislative session on remodeling our school finance system and caring for our most vulnerable children."

The national *KIDS COUNT Data Book* annually ranks states in measures of child well-being across four domains: health, education, economic well-being, and family and community. This year, Texas again placed behind most states, and state legislators have recently failed to enact policies that could improve these outcomes for children. Texas ranks:

- **32nd in economic well-being.** While the number of children in poverty is decreasing, more than 1.6 million Texas kids live in poverty. About 28 percent of children live in families where no parent of the household has full-time, year-round employment.
- **30th in education.** Despite the state's lower ranking in the education domain overall, Texas tied for third best in the percentage of high school students not graduating on time. However, education challenges in college and career readiness remain: 69 percent of Texas fourth graders score below proficient in reading, and 68 percent of Texas eighth graders score below proficient in math.
- **47th in the family and community domain.** More than 1.5 million Texas kids live in families where the head of household lacks a high school diploma. Additionally, 18 percent of Texas children live in high-poverty areas, higher than the national level of 14 percent.
- **39th in health.** Child health insurance rates have improved since 2010, but the state still ranks 48th for its percentage of children lacking coverage. The improvement in insurance access since the passage of the Affordable Care Act must be protected and expanded to provide kids access to critical physical and mental health care and strengthen families' financial security.

"The *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows that there are clear areas where Texas children need more support and investment. While legislators passed some good policies, including reforming the Child Protective Services system and increasing support for kinship caregivers,

they missed ample opportunities to expand health care coverage, remodel our outdated school finance system and feed more children,” said **Ann Beeson**, executive director of the Center for Public Policy Priorities. “Sadly, our lawmakers let down Texas kids by primarily focusing on discriminatory legislation and putting partisan politics over data-based decision making,” added Beeson.

“We must use reliable data to inform policy decisions that ease poverty and create the next generation of healthier and better-educated citizens,” said **Patrick McCarthy**, president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “We call on policymakers to use this evidence to continue and expand what’s working, and to find additional solutions that make a measurable difference for children.”

Release Information

The 2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book will be available June 12 at 11:01 p.m. CDT / 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 the Center for Public Policy Priorities

At the Center for Public Policy Priorities, we believe in a Texas that offers everyone the chance to compete and succeed in life. We envision a Texas where everyone is healthy, well-educated, and financially secure. We want the best Texas — a proud state that sets the bar nationally by expanding opportunity for all.

The Center for Public Policy Priorities is the Texas grantee for the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s national KIDS COUNT Project. Visit www.forabettertexas.org/kidscount.html to view the Center’s Texas-specific data reports and link to our regular updates county-level data on the KIDS COUNT Data Center.

CPPP is an independent public policy organization that uses data and analysis to advocate for solutions that enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full potential. We dare Texas to be the best state for hard-working people and their 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. KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.