

UNDER EMBARGO Until Monday, June 17 at 12:01 a.m. ET

Contact: Shana Bartley | sbartley@dckids.org | 202-234-9404

After D.C. Passes Historic \$15 Billion Budget, New Report Shows Child Poverty Remains Unchanged since 1990

The District has one of the highest child poverty rates in the country, with more than one quarter of children living in families struggling to make ends meet

Washington, D.C. — After months of debate over Mayor Muriel Bowser’s proposal, the Council of the District of Columbia passed a \$15-billion budget for fiscal year 2020. This historic budget includes significant funding for capital improvements, education and health care. Despite record-high revenues, new data released today show that approximately 26 percent of D.C. children live in poverty, a figure that remains the same as it was in 1990 and far above the national average of 18 percent.

Today, the Annie E. Casey Foundation released the *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* — the most comprehensive annual report on child well-being in the United States. This report notes measurable progress in a number of areas since the first *Data Book*, which was published in 1990. Nevertheless, 32,000 D.C. children are among the 13 million U.S. children who live in poverty, and serious racial and ethnic disparities persist.

“During a time of unprecedented prosperity in the District, we must recognize that its distribution remains unequal and think about the most effective strategies to invest in our future. Supporting the healthy growth and development of our children, especially kids of color, is necessary for the success of our community.” said Shana Bartley, executive director at DC Action for Children. “We must ensure that the next generation of Washingtonians has access to every opportunity to reach their full potential.”

The *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* shows how accurate data are necessary for making sound policy and addressing child poverty. The 2010 census missed approximately 5,000 young children in the District, which has implications for planning around schools and neighborhood assets. The upcoming 2020 census will play a vital role in addressing some of the persistent challenges of poverty; however, it will be essential that the District make every effort to gather all responses, especially those from low-income households. According to the data available, 20 percent of D.C. residents live in hard-to-count areas. The stakes are high: 55 major federal programs, including Head Start and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, allocate more than \$880 billion each year based on census data.

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* from the Annie E. Casey Foundation uses 16 indicators to examine each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — as an assessment of child well-being. In D.C.:

- 39 percent of children live in households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Only California and New York have higher percentages. When

families must spend significant portions of their incomes on housing, it leaves their budgets pinched for other household necessities like food, health, out-of-school time, transportation and other important expenses.

- 71 percent of D.C. fourth-graders scored below proficient on national reading assessments. Reading proficiency in the early grades is linked to future success and high school graduation.
- 42 percent of children live in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment. This is higher than the national figure of 27 percent. Parents' consistent employment with livable wages is essential for a family's economic security.

The Casey Foundation points to areas of tremendous improvement in children's lives nationally — including access to health care, decreased rates of teen childbearing and increased rates of high school graduation — and draws a direct line to policies that support this success. Especially as the child population is expanding, there are steps that policymakers should take to help all children thrive. The Casey Foundation calls on elected officials and representatives to:

- *Provide the tools proven to help families lift themselves up economically.* Federal and state earned income tax credits (EITC) and child tax credit programs mean working parents can use more of their take-home pay to meet their children's needs.
- *Address ethnic and racial inequities.* The national and local averages of child well-being can mask the reality that black and brown children still face a greater number of obstacles.
- *Count all kids.* Ensure the 2020 census counts all children, especially those under 5 years old and from hard-to-count areas.

The *2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is the 30th edition of an annual data study that is based on U.S. Census and other publicly available data, representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Release Information

The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 17 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook. 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.

###

About DC Action for Children

DC Action for Children (www.dcactionforchildren.org) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and



advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all children in the District of Columbia have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Through its DC KIDS COUNT project, DC Action is the primary source of data on conditions and outcomes for child well-being in DC.

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.

###