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Hawai'i Plunges to 44th in the Nation in Ensuring Economic Well-Being of Keiki

*Even Before the Pandemic, 50-State Data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation Show
Hawai'i's Children and Youth Falling Behind*

HONOLULU — Hawai'i's ranking in children's economic well-being dropped in one year from 25th to 44th, according to the *2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how families fared between the Great Recession and the start of the COVID-19 crisis.

This year's *Data Book* also shows that Hawai'i dropped from 17th to 26th in the annual KIDS COUNT overall child well-being rankings, which represent the most recent information available but do not capture the impact of the past year.

"By revealing that Hawai'i's keiki were falling behind the rest of the nation even before the pandemic, the newest *KIDS COUNT Data Book* should be a warning bell to everyone who cares about our state's children," said Deborah Zysman, executive director of Hawai'i Children's Action Network, Hawai'i's member of the KIDS COUNT network. "Policymakers and community leaders must act boldly to prevent our children's well-being from deteriorating further."

Sixteen indicators measuring four domains — economic well-being, education, health and family and community context — are used by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in each year's *Data Book* to assess child well-being. There are four indicators that comprise the economic well-being domain:

- **CHILDREN IN POVERTY:** In 2019, 12% of Hawai'i's children lived in households with incomes below the poverty line. Hawai'i ranks well in child poverty, at eighth in the nation, largely because the official poverty line does not factor in the high cost of living here.
- **CHILDREN LIVING IN FAMILIES WHERE NO PARENT HAS FULL-TIME, YEAR-ROUND EMPLOYMENT:** In 2019, 24% of Hawai'i children lived in families where no parent was fully employed. With the highest unemployment rate in the nation for most of 2020, this indicator will likely worsen for Hawai'i with data that reflect the impact of the pandemic.
- **CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLDS THAT SPEND MORE THAN 30% OF THEIR INCOME ON HOUSING:** In 2019, Hawai'i fell to 49th in the nation for this indicator, with 38% of children living in households that were housing cost-burdened, reflecting Hawai'i's affordable housing crisis.
- **TEENS AGES 16 TO 19 NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL AND NOT WORKING:** In 2019, 10% of Hawai'i's teens were not in school and not working, placing them at 47th in the nation. This indicator also will likely worsen with data that reflect the impact of the pandemic.

“It is very concerning that Hawai‘i already ranked in the bottom 10 states on children’s economic well-being, according to these pre-pandemic data,” said Ivette Rodriguez Stern, junior specialist at the UH Center on the Family. “It took the lowest-income families a decade to recover from the Great Recession, and now we are once again facing the threat of a greater share of our keiki growing up in economic hardship, which can have long-lasting effects on education and future employment.”

In addition, Census Bureau survey data collected since the start of the coronavirus crisis add to the story of Hawai‘i’s children and families in this moment:

- In March 2021, 61% of Hawai‘i households with children reported losing employment income since the start of the pandemic. In comparison, the national percentage of similar households reporting lost income was 49%. This wide gap highlights the disproportionate economic effect of the coronavirus crisis on Hawai‘i’s families and children.

Our state’s leaders should prioritize investing in children, families and communities to ensure an equitable and expansive recovery. These priorities include boosting the Earned Income Tax Credit, expanding early learning programs, enacting paid family and sick leave and adopting student-centered budgeting.

The *Data Book* shows that simply returning to a pre-pandemic level of support for children and families would shortchange thousands of Hawai‘i kids and fail to address persistent racial and ethnic disparities.

Release Information

The *2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 21 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.

A dashboard of selected Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey data for Hawai‘i between April 2020 and March 2021 is available at www.hawaii-can.org/covid19_dashboard.

About Hawai‘i Children’s Action Network

Hawai‘i Children’s Action Network (HCAN) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and the only one in the state of Hawai‘i solely committed to advocating for children. We address the root causes of poverty and inequity and develop public policies that help children 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.

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