



**UNDER EMBARGO Until August 8, 2022 at 12:01 a.m. ET**

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## **Massachusetts Ranks #1 in Child Well-Being but Children Still Suffering from Mental Health Pandemic**

*Data across 50 states show 7.3 million kids with anxiety or depression as effects of coronavirus crisis linger, Annie E. Casey Foundation Finds*

**BOSTON** — As one of the wealthiest states in the nation, there’s no doubt that Massachusetts should use its vast resources to ensure an equitable future for our children. Massachusetts ranks first in child well-being, according to the **2022 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how children and families are faring. However, children in America are in the midst of a mental health crisis, struggling with anxiety and depression at unprecedented levels. This year the annual report focuses on youth mental health, concurring with a recent assessment by the U.S. surgeon general that conditions amount to a youth “mental health pandemic.”

The report sheds light on the health, economic and other challenges affecting American children as well as how those challenges are more likely to affect children of color.

Key Massachusetts findings from *Data Book* show that from 2016-2020:

- There was a 50.8% increase in children ages 3 to 17 who had anxiety or depression, nearly double the national average;
- Nearly 420,000 households spent more than 30% of income on housing;
- Only 21,000 went without health insurance, making the Commonwealth #1 also in child health; and
- 164,000 children are living in poverty with families of four earning less than \$26,246 annually.

“The data clearly show that the Commonwealth has a lot further to go to create an equitable future for our children,” said **Marie-Frances Rivera, President of MassBudget, home to KIDS COUNT in Massachusetts**. If we’re going to rank #1, we must ensure that all kids means *all* kids. We can achieve this here in the Commonwealth by raising new, sustainable revenue to make the investments needed to drive equity for this generation and the next.”

The *Data Book* reports that children across America, and in more than 40 states and the District of Columbia, were more likely to encounter anxiety or depression during the first year of the COVID-19 crisis than previously, with the national figure jumping 26% from 9.4% for children ages 3-17 (5.8 million) to 11.8% (7.3 million) between 2016 and 2020. This increase represents 1.5 million more children across the country who are struggling to make it through the day.

Policymakers and individuals here in the Commonwealth have an opportunity to solve for these challenges by:

- Sustaining new investments to provide universal school meals for children;
- Investing in universal, affordable early education and wraparound supports for children and providers;
- Expanding access to mental health supports for young people in our schools;
- Increasing cash supports that help families make ends meet, like expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit to large families and residents filing taxes with individual taxpayer identification numbers (ITINs); and
- Supporting rent control policies and rent-to-own opportunities through legislation such as the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA).

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#### **RELEASE INFORMATION**

The 2022 *KIDS COUNT*® *Data Book* will be available at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://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 <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>.

#### **About MassBudget**

**The Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center (MassBudget)** is a leading think tank advancing policy solutions to create an inclusive, thriving Commonwealth for all. MassBudget is the home to KIDS COUNT in Massachusetts. For more information, visit <http://massbudget.org> or follow us on social media @MassBudget.

#### **ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's young children, youth and young adults 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.

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