

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 14, 2023, at 12:01 a.m. ET

CONTACT: Sonia Lindell, lindell@floridapolicy.org, (407) 440-1421 x702

Florida Ranks 31st in Child Well-Being but Inaccessible, Unaffordable Child Care Pushes Parents to the Breaking Point

50-State Data Show Economy Loses \$122 Billion a Year as Child Care Challenges Cause Parents to Miss, Quit or Scale Back Work, Annie E. Casey Foundation Finds

Florida ranks 31st in child well-being, according to the 2023 *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, our country's lack of affordable and accessible child care short-changes children and causes parents in Florida to frequently miss work or even quit their jobs, while those who can find care are paying dearly for it. These child care challenges cost the American economy billions of dollars.

Among the four domains that make up the index, the state ranks 37th in economic well-being, 33rd in health, 32nd in family and community, and 5th in education.

Norín Dollard, PhD, senior policy analyst and director of KIDS Count at Florida Policy Institute, said: "Florida prides itself on universal pre-K for 4-year-olds and expanded eligibility for the state's School Readiness program to improve access to child care. However, availability of quality child care, which is already uneven, is stymied by the labor shortages in the industry and lower wages relative to other sectors."

The *Data Book* reports too many parents cannot secure child care that is compatible with work schedules and commutes. The *Data Book* reports that in 2020–21, 13% of children birth to age 5 in Florida lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care, the same as the national average. And women are five to eight times more likely than men to experience negative employment consequences related to caregiving.

Even if parents can find an opening at child care near their home, they often can't pay for it. Florida's average cost of center-based child care for a toddler in 2021 was \$8,678, 9% of median income of a married couple and 26% of a single mother's income in the state.

While the cost of care burdens families, child care workers are paid worse than 98% of professions. Median national pay for child care workers was \$28,520 per year or \$13.71 an hour in 2022, less than the wage for retail (\$14.26) and customer service (\$18.16) workers.

The failings of the child care market also affect the current and future health of the American economy, costing \$122 billion a year in lost earnings, productivity, and tax revenue, [according to one study](#). In Florida, these

losses are estimated at \$6.6 billion, which comes to 5% of the nation’s lost earnings, productivity, and revenue. These challenges put parents under tremendous stress to meet the dual responsibilities of providing for their families and ensuring their children are safe and nurtured.

Each year, the *Data Book* presents national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors — and ranks the states according to how children are faring overall.

Nina Perez, National Director for Early Learning at MomsRising noted. “This year, again, it is clear that Florida families are without the quality, affordable child care they need. That means too many of our youngest learners are missing out on opportunities to learn and grow, academically and socially, and too many parents are being forced out of the workforce by our failure to build a care infrastructure. Making things even worse here in Florida are the irresponsible anti-immigrant policies which, because of labor shortages and rising costs, are decimating the child care workforce, which relies on many immigrant women and women of color. If we don’t solve our state’s child care crisis, we won’t have successful families or a successful economy.”

Transitioning from a faltering child care system to creating a flourishing one will take new thinking and investing at the local, state, and national levels. An executive order issued by President Biden in April is aimed at expanding access, lowering costs, and raising wages. It could prove to be a helpful framework, but more is needed:

- Federal, state, and local governments should invest more in child care. State and local governments should maximize remaining pandemic recovery act dollars to fund needed child care services and capacity. Congress should reauthorize and strengthen the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act and increase funding for public pre-K and Head Start.
- Public and private leaders should work together to improve the infrastructure for home-based child care, beginning by lowering the barriers to entry for potential providers by increasing access to start-up and expansion capital.
- To help young parents, Congress should expand the federal Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, which serves student parents.

###

RELEASE INFORMATION: The 2023 *KIDS COUNT*® *Data Book* will be available 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.aecf.org.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's young people 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.

The Florida Policy Institute is an independent, nonpartisan, and nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing state policies and budgets that improve the economic mobility and quality of life for all Floridians.