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Hawai'i Ranks 44th in the Nation in Economic Well-Being of Keiki

*50-State Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation Also Finds
Hawai'i's Child Care Costs Rank Seventh Highest in the Nation*

HONOLULU — Hawai'i's ranking in children's economic well-being is 44th, or the seventh lowest in the nation, 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. The *Data Book* also reports that Hawai'i parents face some of the highest child care costs in the nation.

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. *The Data Book* ranks the states according to how children are faring overall. In the 2023 report, Hawai'i ranks 44th in economic well-being, 19th in education, 13th in health, and eighth in family and community context. Taken together, Hawai'i ranks 25th in overall children's well-being.

The *Data Book* also reports that too many parents cannot secure child care that is compatible with work schedules and commutes. The *Data Book* reports that 12% of Hawai'i children under age 6 lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of challenges acquiring child care in 2020-21, during the heights of the pandemic. 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. Hawai'i's average cost of center-based child care for a toddler was \$13,919, or 12% of the median income of a married couple and 35% of a single mother's income in the state. That is significantly higher than current in-state annual tuition of \$11,304 at the University of Hawai'i (UH) at Mānoa.

While the cost of care burdens families, child care workers are some of the worst paid in the state. Median pay for child care professionals in Hawai'i was \$14.56 an hour in 2022, less than the typical wage for retail (\$16.06) and customer service (\$17.94) workers.

"Child care and education professionals are the workforce that enable so many other workforces. We need more of them to join or remain in the sector, which means ensuring that they are paid enough to not only live, but thrive," said Deborah Zysman, executive director of Hawai'i Children's Action Network, Hawai'i's member of the KIDS COUNT network. "When our community invests in our child care workers, we are also investing in making workers available for other industries and contributing to our state's growth for generations to come."

There are four KIDS COUNT indicators that comprise the children's economic well-being domain and help explain Hawai'i's rank at 44th in this domain:

- **CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLDS THAT SPEND MORE THAN 30% OF THEIR INCOME ON HOUSING:** In 2021, Hawai'i ranked 49th in the nation for this indicator, with 39% 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 2021, 10% of Hawai'i's teens were not in school and not working, placing them at 44th in the nation.
- **CHILDREN LIVING IN FAMILIES WHERE NO PARENT HAS FULL-TIME, YEAR-ROUND EMPLOYMENT:** In 2021, 31% of Hawai'i children lived in families where no parent was fully employed, for a ranking of 37th in the nation.
- **CHILDREN IN POVERTY:** In 2021, 14% of Hawai'i's children lived in households with incomes below the poverty line. Hawai'i ranks better than the U.S. average in child poverty, at 18th in the nation, largely because the official poverty level does not factor in the high cost of living here.

"The impacts of the pandemic on the economic well-being of our keiki can be seen in this year's report, particularly with two indicators: 1) children in poverty and 2) children whose parents lack secure employment," said Ivette Rodriguez Stern, junior specialist at the UH Center on the Family. "Growing up in economic hardship can have harmful lifelong effects on the well-being of our children. Although important tax credits for low- and moderate-income families were recently expanded, we can and should do much more to support Hawaii's working families now."

Our state's leaders need to prioritize investing in children, families and communities to ensure an equitable and expansive recovery. These priorities include boosting and expanding early learning programs, child care and early education workers' pay as well as enacting paid family and sick leave.

Release Information

The *2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 13 at 6:01 p.m. HST at aecf.org. Additional information is available at 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 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. For more information, visit hawaii-can.org.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

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 aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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