

## Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center

**UNDER EMBARGO Until June 14, 2023 at 12:01 a.m. ET**

Contact: Adam Jones | [ajones@massbudget.org](mailto:ajones@massbudget.org) | 617-426-1228

### **Massachusetts Ranks #1 in Education But Accessible, High-Quality Child Care Remains Out of Reach for Many Families**

*While Massachusetts families continue to benefit from relatively high-quality education and healthcare for children, many families do not fare well financially.*

Massachusetts ranks first in both education and child health and 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 Massachusetts 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 a year and stymie women professionally.

As has been true for many years, Massachusetts ranks highly in both the education and health domains of the *Data Book*. With a robust, comprehensive Medicaid system (MassHealth) and steadily increasing, equity-focused financial support for elementary and secondary schools (due to the 2019 Student Opportunity Act), Massachusetts provides policy models to which many states aspire. Unfortunately, the cost of living in Massachusetts can make it a difficult place for families to thrive. Thirty percent of children in the Commonwealth live in households that are cost burdened by housing. Bay Staters looking to start families are forced to reckon with the most expensive child care of any state in the country.

"While these data show that children in Massachusetts fare better than they do in other states, they also demonstrate unmet need and serious hardship for many families, especially when it comes to accessing affordable, high-quality child care," said Marie-Frances Rivera, President of MassBudget, home to KIDS COUNT in Massachusetts. "For the past 20 years, Massachusetts has made innovations in both health care and public education that have made us national leaders in these areas. Now we need to lead the nation in addressing the child care affordability crisis. Because every kid in the Commonwealth deserves a great start and every child care worker deserves a fair wage"

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, 12% of Massachusetts children under age 6 lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care. And women are five to eight times more likely than men to experience negative employment consequences related to caregiving.

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](#). All of 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.

Transitioning from a faltering child care system to 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. The Massachusetts legislature should continue to fully fund C3 provider grants, which ensure that licensed child care programs across the state are able to continue operating.
- 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.

This legislative session, our legislature can move us closer to an equitable Commonwealth by passing a budget and other legislation that prioritizes affordable child care for Massachusetts families.

## **RELEASE INFORMATION**

The [2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book](http://www.aecf.org) 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**

MassBudget is a leading think tank advancing equitable policy solutions that create an inclusive, thriving Commonwealth. For 35 years, MassBudget has partnered with advocates, legislators, grassroots organizations and national thought leaders to provide research and data to solve the Commonwealth's most pressing issues. MassBudget has been credited with providing the research and analysis necessary for the achievement of critical policy advances including: raising the Massachusetts \$15 minimum wage, establishing Paid Family & Medical Leave, achieving Earned Paid Sick Time, fairer corporate taxes that have netted substantial revenue for vital state programs, boosting take-home pay for low-income families through Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) increases, and playing a substantial role in the passage of the nation's most progressive K-12 education funding bill – the 2019 Student Opportunity Act.

## **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.