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Mississippi Ranks 48th in Overall Child Well-Being, With Significant Challenges and Opportunities for Quality Child Care

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

Jackson, Mississippi-- Mississippi ranks 48th 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. 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. Of these, Mississippi had its highest ranking (32nd) in education, with specific improvements in the percentage of high school students graduating on time.

The *Data Book* reports that too many parents cannot secure child care that is compatible with work schedules and commutes. “A good child care system is essential for kids to thrive and our economy to prosper. But our current approach fails kids, parents, and child care workers by every measure,” said Lisa Hamilton, president, and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Without safe child care they can afford and get to, working parents face impossible choices, affecting not only their families but their employers as well.”

However, our country’s lack of affordable and accessible child care provides challenges for children and their families. It often causes parents to 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.

The *Data Book* reports that in 2020–21, 12% of Mississippi children ages birth to five lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care. Women are five to eight times more likely than men to experience negative employment consequences related to the caregiving of young children.

Mississippi’s average cost of center-based child care for toddlers was \$4,382, which is 19% of the median income of single mothers and 5% of the median income of married couples with children in Mississippi. This is particularly important, given that 41.8% of Mississippi’s children 0-5 years of age live in single-parent households.

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. In Mississippi, the hourly median wage for child care workers was \$9.83 in 2022 compared to \$8.45 in 2021. This is the lowest hourly rate of all states.

A 2020 study by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, estimated that Mississippi lost \$673 million annually due to child care issues and cost employers \$553 million in turnover and absences. In terms of tax revenue, \$120 million was lost because of turnover and absences. 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.

Linda H. Southward, Executive Director of the Children’s Foundation of Mississippi, notes “The recent change in state policy in removing barriers to the Child Care Payment Program (CCPP) will soon allow several thousand more children access to child care in our state. These changes, along with the continued increase in investment by the Mississippi legislature for Pre-K Collaborative funding, are building momentum for more positive outcomes for children in Mississippi.”

The Annie E. Casey Foundation supports the following policy recommendations:

- 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 expand capacity.
- 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.

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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.

About the Children’s Foundation of Mississippi

The Children’s Foundation of Mississippi is an independent operating foundation focused on improving the policies and systems that affect the well-being of children in our state. We were founded in 2019 to serve as a convener, facilitator, advocate, and catalyst for positive change.

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

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