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CONTACT:

Sammi Chickering, schickering@new-futures.org, 603.225.9540 ext. 120

NEW HAMPSHIRE IS RANKED NO. 1 IN CHILD WELL-BEING, BUT INACCESSIBLE AND 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

CONCORD, NH — New Hampshire is the best state in the country for child well-being, according to a new national report. However, in the Granite State and across America, the lack of affordable and accessible child care continues to challenge families and strain state economies.

The **2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent household data released this week by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, presents national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains – economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors – and ranks states according to how children are faring. Despite New Hampshire’s top overall ranking, thousands of Granite State parents, like others across the country, have to frequently miss work or quit their jobs due to the lack of affordable and accessible child care, 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.

“Even if a family can afford child care, the demand on providers currently exceeds their capacity to serve families,” **said Rebecca Woitkowski, Kids Count Policy Director for New Futures**, New Hampshire’s leading health policy and advocacy organization.

“Across New Hampshire, more than 40 child care centers have closed in the last few years, eliminating nearly 1,500 slots for children and adding to the growing demand for availability,” Woitkowski said. “This is an economic issue that needs to be addressed to ensure all our parents can work and contribute to the economy.”

The *Data Book* reports that in 2020–21, 14% of children in New Hampshire ages birth to five lived in families in which someone had to quit, change, or refuse 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.

Even if parents can find an opening at child care near their home, they often can't pay for it. New Hampshire's average cost of center-based child care for a toddler was \$12,496, 9% of a married couple's median income and 31% of a single mother's median 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. 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 — and ranks the states according to how children are faring overall.

Some of the report's key takeaways include:

- **New Hampshire ranked 4th in economic well-being.** Even with this high ranking, the number of children in poverty doesn't consider that New Hampshire's cost of living is 20% above the national average, putting even more children and families at risk of living in poverty. Growing up in poverty or at near-poverty levels can adversely impact a child's life trajectory.
- **New Hampshire ranked 4th in education, but 7th in the nation for the number of 3- and 4-year-olds not attending school.** Nearly half of 3- and 4-year-olds in the Granite State are not receiving early education, which research has demonstrated is critical for development and long-term success.
- **New Hampshire ranked 3rd in health, but 7th in the nation for child and teen deaths per 100,000 children and youths ages 1 to 19.** Nationally, data shows an increase in the child and teen death rate, reflecting a large increase in homicides and drug overdoses.
- **New Hampshire ranked 2nd in family and community.** The number of Granite State children living in single-parent families continues to rise, reaching 29% — up from 27% in 2010.

"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."

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. In New Hampshire, the state legislature recently included investments into the child care workforce and accessibility improvements to the state's child care scholarship program in the state's FY 2024/2025 budget, more than doubling funding for child care supports when compared to the previous year.

An executive order issued by President Biden in April is aimed at expanding access, lowering costs, and raising wages nationally. 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.
- 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 <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>.

ABOUT NEW FUTURES

New Futures is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates, educates and collaborates to improve the health and wellness of all New Hampshire residents. Learn more at new-futures.org.

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

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