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Contact: Sonakshi Dhimal | sonakshi@ourchildrenoregon.org | 503-501-6022

Oregon Ranks 26th in Child Well-Being, but Inaccessible, Unaffordable Child Care Pushes Parents to the Breaking Point

50-State Data in Annie E. Casey Foundation Report Reveals Child Care Challenges, Including \$122 Billion Annual Loss to U.S. Economy

Portland, Oregon — Oregon ranks 26th 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 Oregon 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.

The lack of accessible child care in Oregon has significant implications beyond the concerns of families, as it costs the state's economy an estimated \$2.15 billion annually due to decreased productivity, lost earnings, and increased public assistance, according to a report by the Oregon Child Care Research Partnership. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the issue, with a recent survey finding that 70% of childcare providers experienced a decline in enrollment relating to the pandemic, and almost half of them are uncertain about their ability to remain open. In response, Oregon has taken steps to address the problem, such as passing legislation to increase funding for low-income families to access affordable childcare through the Employment Related Day Care program and supporting childcare providers. Despite these efforts, advocates continue to push for increased funding and policy changes to ensure that all Oregonian families have access to affordable and high-quality childcare.

“As a state, we need to recognize that the lack of accessible and affordable childcare is not only a concern for families but is also an economic issue. We must invest in policies and funding that prioritize supporting our working families and childcare providers.” said Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director of Our Children Oregon, Oregon’s member of the KIDS COUNT network.

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, 15% of parents in Oregon with children ages birth to five 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. Oregon's average cost of center-based child care for a toddler was \$13,700, 12% of a married couple's average income and 37% of a single parent'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. 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* ranks the states according to how children are faring, presenting national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains: economic well-being (Oregon ranked 30th), education (44th), health (7th), and family and community (16th). Oregon's overall rank of 26th reflects both areas of strength and ways the state can bolster its policies that support child well-being.

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. Oregon's priority is to increase access to affordable and high-quality child care options for all families in the state, as evidenced by recent legislation to expand funding for the Employment Related Day Care program and to support child care providers.
- 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 Our Children Oregon

Our Children Oregon activates meaningful change statewide to ensure children statewide have what they need to thrive, regardless of their race, their ability, or where they live. We do this through policy, advocacy, research and engagement activities. Our Children Oregon is part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's network of KIDS COUNT state organizations.

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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