



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

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## **Washington Ranks 16<sup>th</sup> in Child Well-Being, but Inaccessible, 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*

Seattle — Washington State ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation when it comes to the health of its children, 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 Washington 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.

“Despite state investments over the past three years to shore up the child care system and reduce cost for families, many still struggle to find and afford care,” said Dr. Stephan Blanford, Executive Director of Children’s Alliance, Washington’s member of the KIDS COUNT network. “The combination of sky-rocketing inflation and lack of provider availability means that many Washington parents and caregivers face enormous pressures to provide for their children *and* find care for them. These pressures are magnified for Black, brown and other children of color who are more likely to experience poverty or have caregivers who lack secure employment because of historic and persistent racial injustice. ”

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 children birth to age 5 in Washington lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care, a figure similar to the national average. 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. Washington’s average cost of center-based child care for a toddler was \$14,355, 12% of the median income of a married couple and 39% of a single mother’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.

Some 94% of child care workers are women; 14% are Black, and 4% are Asian. Across all races, 24% described their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino.

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.

Dr. Blanford added, “All children deserve quality early learning experiences with caregivers who are committed to helping them flourish. Policymakers in Washington took concrete steps in the most recent legislative session to reduce child care costs for families and make it more sustainable to the providers. But we need to go further to ensure that every child can thrive during the formative first years in their life.”

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. Washington lawmakers should seriously consider proposals that ensure super-rich state residents pay their fair share in taxes for public goods that benefit everyone.
- 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](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 [datacenter.aecf.org](http://datacenter.aecf.org).

#### **ABOUT CHILDREN’S ALLIANCE**

[Children’s Alliance](http://www.childrensalliance.org) is Washington’s statewide, nonpartisan child advocacy organization. We help people tap into their personal political power so they can advocate for change in their communities. We partner with families, lawmakers, community leaders, service providers and policy experts to develop antiracist policy solutions that improve the lives of Washington kids and build a better shared future for all.

#### **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



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