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Connecticut Ranks #8 in Nation for Overall Child Well-Being, But Economic Inequities Threaten Future Progress

New Data Underscores State's Strengths in Health and Education — and Urgency to Act on Housing, Poverty, and Overall Economic Wellbeing

NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT — For the second year in a row, Connecticut ranks 8th in the nation for overall child well-being, according to the **2025 KIDS COUNT Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how kids are faring in post-pandemic America.

While Connecticut continues to lead nationally in a number of rankings related to health care and education, the 2025 Data Book also reveals growing concerns around child poverty, educational attainment among adults, and skyrocketing housing costs. Connecticut Voices for Children, the state's member of the KIDS COUNT network, is calling on state leaders to build on existing policy wins while addressing persistent economic inequities that threaten to undermine the state's progress.

"Our consistent top-10 ranking is a testament to what's possible when we invest in kids and working families," **said Emily Byrne, Executive Director of Connecticut Voices for Children.** "But progress is fragile. Federal proposals to slash funding for Medicaid, SNAP, and other vital programs could reverse hard-won gains. At the same time, housing costs are soaring and poverty is on the rise, especially for children. Connecticut must meet this moment with bold, equity-centered action."

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.

Key findings from this year's *Data Book* include:

Where Connecticut Excels

- **4th Grade Reading Proficiency:** Connecticut ranks third in the nation for education overall, including ranking 3rd in 4th grade reading proficiency, up from 8th. While the percentage of students reading below proficiency has increased over the past decade, a trend worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, recent data suggests that academic recovery efforts are starting to yield results. As the state continues to address learning loss and invest in student support, incremental improvements are emerging.
- **Children's Health Insurance Coverage:** Connecticut continues to demonstrate leadership in children's health, with nearly universal health insurance coverage—Connecticut ranks 3rd-best in percentage of children without health insurance. Since 2016, the percentage of uninsured children in Connecticut has remained low, consistently around 3%. This strong performance is largely due to the state's robust Medicaid program, HUSKY, which currently provides health coverage to more than 366,000 children.

Emerging Concerns

- **Child Poverty Rising:** Connecticut now ranks 14th in the nation for the percentage of children living in poverty, a decline from last year's ranking. While the ranking may not seem alarming on

its own, the increase in child poverty is cause for concern. This reversal comes after a period of significant progress driven by federal policies that dramatically reduced poverty nationwide, such as the Child Tax Credit, and were bolstered by state measures such as an increased Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and a one-time child tax rebate in 2022.

- **High School Diploma Attainment:** 9% of Connecticut children live in households where the head of household lacks a high school diploma, ranking the state 22nd in this measure. This reflects a concerning 13% increase from 2019 to 2023.

Urgent Challenges

- **High-Poverty Areas:** Connecticut ranks 29th in the nation for the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas. Although the share of children in these neighborhoods declined slightly, from an estimated 8% in 2014–18 to 7% in 2019–23, the state’s ranking moved to the bottom half nationally, signaling a persistent and concerning concentration of poverty in certain communities.
- **Housing Cost Burden:** Connecticut ranks 44th in the nation for housing cost burden, reflecting one of the most severe affordability challenges in the country. Housing costs have steadily increased over the past decade, and this issue is the primary factor dragging down the state’s overall ranking in economic well-being.

In its 36th year of publication, the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* provides reliable statewide numbers to help leaders see where progress is being made, where greater support is needed and which strategies are making a difference.

Connecticut’s strong foundation in child well-being, reflected in its consistent top-10 national ranking and notable strengths in education and health care, stands in sharp contrast to the state’s declining performance in economic well-being. The growing threat of deep federal cuts to core programs like Medicaid and SNAP, combined with inaction on long-term affordability and income inequality, threatens to deepen existing disparities.

Connecticut Voices for Children urges state lawmakers and officials to strategically adjust fiscal policies to meet the rising economic pressures facing working families. By prioritizing progressive revenue, investing in communities and supporting initiatives that expand access to affordable housing, Connecticut, one of the wealthiest states in the nation, can fully leverage its resources to create a more equitable future for all residents.

“By staying grounded in data and driven by what children and families say they need, we can help ensure that all young people have the chance to thrive and contribute meaningfully as adults, helping to grow our future workforce, reduce long-term social and economic costs and build a stronger society for everyone,” said **Lisa Lawson, president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.**

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The *2025 KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be 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 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.