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Hawai'i Keiki Face Mounting Economic Strain: State Ranks Among Worst for Housing Stability as Parental Employment Security Declines

50-State Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation Highlights Need to Bolster Support for Hawai'i Children and Their Families

HONOLULU — Hawai'i's children are being hit hard by housing and job instability, 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. The report signals an urgent need for action from Hawai'i leaders as the state faces a potential economic recession and deep federal funding cuts.

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.

This year, Hawai'i ranks 24th in overall children's well-being in the *Data Book*, as well as 33rd in the economic well-being domain, 29th in education, 10th in health, and 14th in family and community context. Key findings from the *Data Book* include:

- More than 1 in 3 Hawai'i children lived in households burdened by high housing costs in 2023, ranking Hawai'i 46th in the nation for housing stability, and reflecting the state's affordable housing crisis.
- Hawai'i also saw an increase in children whose parents lacked secure employment, from 24% in 2019 to 28% in 2023. That stands in contrast to the national average dropping from 26% to 25%, resulting in Hawai'i's rank worsening from 16th in the nation in 2019 to 36th in 2023.
- One area in which Hawai'i fares very well is in children's health, with the second lowest death rate for children and teenagers and the third lowest percentage of children without health insurance in 2023.

With the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization predicting a recession in the coming year, as well as the federal budget reconciliation bill potentially pushing tens of thousands of Hawai'i families out of essential food assistance and health programs, the economic strain on Hawai'i's keiki is likely to worsen and further threaten their stability.

Children's experts and advocates, including Hawai'i Children's Action Network and the University of Hawai'i Center on the Family, say these findings underscore the need for lawmakers to proactively shore up government programs and social service agencies that support children and families.

“It took the lowest-income families a decade to recover from the Great Recession, and now we are once again facing the threat of a greater share of our keiki growing up in economic hardship, which can have harmful lifelong effects on their well-being,” said Ivette Rodriguez Stern, junior specialist at the University of Hawai‘i Center on the Family. “Without bold action from our leaders, it will be difficult for our children and their families to climb out of the upcoming economic hole they’re likely to experience,” Stern added.

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. By offering a local road map, the *Data Book* equips policymakers, advocates and communities with the information they need to make decisions that help kids and young people thrive.

“Year after year, the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* reminds us that more can and must be done to support the economic well-being of Hawai‘i’s children and their families. With the looming threat of a recession and harsh cuts to crucial programs, our state’s leaders must act now to prevent our children’s well-being from deteriorating further,” said Deborah Zysman, Executive Director of Hawai‘i Children’s Action Network.

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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. A summary of Hawai‘i’s rankings in the 2025 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available at www.hawaii-can.org/kidscount.

ABOUT HAWAI‘I CHILDREN’S ACTION NETWORK

Hawai‘i Children’s Action Network (HCAN) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and the only one in the state of Hawai‘i solely committed to advocating for children. We address the root causes of poverty and inequity and develop public policies that help children and their families. For more information, visit hawaii-can.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.