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Contact: Kali Schumitz, kschumitz@mdeconomy.org, 410-412-9105

Maryland Ranks 21st in 2025 KIDS COUNT Data Book as MDCEP Urges Continued Focus on Public Investments that Support Thriving Kids and Families

Data show that while families are more financially secure, Maryland students still face significant challenges, the Annie E. Casey Foundation finds

BALTIMORE — Maryland continues to rank in the middle among states in child well-being, ranking 21st 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 data reflect the increased economic security Maryland families experienced in recent years, thanks to policies like expanded working family tax credits and a higher state minimum wage. However, leaders must continue efforts to improve educational outcomes for students and avoid cuts in essential public services under a tightening state budget to protect the improvements in families' economic well-being.

"We know what kids need to grow up healthy and connected so they can thrive as adults: Stable homes, strong schools, nutritious food, meaningful relationships and opportunities to learn, play and grow. Programs that meet these needs are smart investments, fostering long-term gains like employment and economic growth," said Benjamin Orr, President and CEO of the Maryland Center on Economic Policy (MDCEP), Maryland's member of the Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT network.

"The Data Book reflects significant improvements in families' economic well-being over the last five years, thanks in large part to federal and state policies that raised wages, brought unemployment to historic lows, and put more cash in families' pockets," said Nonso Umunna, MDCEP's KIDS COUNT Director. "At the same time, we know what is not in the data is that many families in our state are now newly facing hardship because of federal layoffs and cuts, and the vital programs that protect and support families in times of need are also at risk because of federal and state budget cuts."

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.

Highlights of the 2025 Maryland indicators include:

- In 2023, 142,000 or 11% of children lived in households with income below the poverty line, an 8% decrease since 2019 with Maryland ranking 6th nationally.
- In 2023, 273,000 or 20% of children lived with parents who lack secure employment, a 17% decrease since 2019 with Maryland ranking 6th nationally.
- In 2023, 400,000 or 29% of children lived in households with high housing cost burden, a 6% decrease since 2019 with Maryland ranking 33rd nationally.
- In 2019-23, 82,000 or 54% of children ages 3 and 4 were not attending school, an 8% increase, from 2014-18, ranking Maryland 14th nationally.
- In 2024, 66% of 4th graders scored below proficient in reading, a 2% increase since 2019 with Maryland ranking 8th nationally.
- In 2024, 75% of 8th graders scored below proficient in math, a 12% increase since 2019 with Maryland ranking 29th nationally.

While Maryland students' test scores have improved some in recent years, following the COVID-related setbacks seen nationwide, they still lag 2019 levels. Maryland policymakers have a great opportunity to foster continued improvement by fully funding and implementing the 2021 education reforms known as the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

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. MDCEP encourages lawmakers and officials in Maryland to use this detailed information to unite across party lines and respond with initiatives that invest in young people. 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.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2025 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available at www.aecf.org/databook. 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 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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The Maryland Center on Economic Policy advances innovative policy ideas to foster broad prosperity and help our state be the standard-bearer for responsible public policy. We engage in research, analysis, strategic communications, public education, and grassroots alliances promoting robust debate and greater public awareness of the policy choices Maryland residents face together. mdeconomy.org