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**Nebraska Ranks 10th in 2025 KIDS COUNT Data Book as Voices for Children in Nebraska
Advocates Support for Kids and Families to Thrive**

Data shows that Nebraska has maintained economic stability for families, but post-pandemic education challenges continue to impact child well-being, the Annie E. Casey Foundation finds

OMAHA, NE — Nebraska ranks 10th in 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. Nebraska's high ranking is driven mostly by its strong economic well-being scores, but the *Data Book* shows that Nebraska leaders must do more to reverse declines in student test scores, particularly reading proficiency numbers that have declined substantially from pre-pandemic levels.

Every 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 and by domain. Nebraska ranks as the 3rd best state in economic well-being, 21st in education, 17th in health, and 15th in family and community factors.

Nebraska's economic well-being ranking is driven by relatively low poverty rates and rates of teens working or in school. The state's economy remained surprisingly stable throughout the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery. In Nebraska, 11% of children were in poverty in 2023, the same as before the pandemic started in 2019. In addition, 81% of families with children had at least one parent working full-time in 2019. That number remained at 81% in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Meanwhile, only 4% of teens ages 16 to 19 were not attending school or not working, the second lowest percentage in the nation.

The major trouble spot for children in Nebraska came in the domain of education. While reading scores for 4th graders have worsened since 2015, the pandemic appears to have compounded the problem. The percentage of Nebraska's fourth graders who were not reading at a proficient level rose from 63% in 2019 to 66% by 2022, then rose further to 72% in 2024. Thus, from 2019 to 2024, Nebraska's 4th-grade reading proficiency ranking fell from 12th in the nation to 35th, making it the state's worst-ranked indicator of child well-being.

"By offering both a big-picture view and 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," said Josh Shirk, Research Coordinator of Voices for Children in Nebraska, Nebraska's member of the Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT network. "It shows that economic supports such as the child tax credit and the expansion of food programs provided much-needed help during the pandemic. The *Data Book* also highlights the need for additional support for students and educators as test scores,

particularly reading scores in Nebraska, have declined substantially in recent years.”

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. Voices for Children encourages lawmakers and officials in Nebraska to use this detailed information to unite across party lines and respond with initiatives that invest in young people.

“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,” said Juliet Summers, Executive Director at Voices for Children. “Programs that meet these needs are smart investments, fostering long-term gains like employment and economic growth. Nebraska has a lot to be proud of, but also plenty of work still to do to maximize opportunity for all our state’s children.”

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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.

ABOUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEBRASKA

Voices for Children in Nebraska is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to building pathways to opportunity for all children. Our mission is to advocate for equitable opportunity for Nebraska kids through research, policy advocacy, and community engagement.