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Virginia Ranks 11th in 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book as New Scores Show Education and Economic Well-Being Declines

*New Scoring Index Shows Virginia's Overall Score of **661** remains **above the national average**, while five-year trends highlight the need for continued investment in education and family economic security*

Richmond, Virginia— Virginia continues to rank in the top 20 across all major indicators, according to the 2026 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, a 50-state report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation on how children are faring nationwide. Still, the state's lowest ranking this year was in economic well-being at 17th, underscoring the need for continued policy investment, especially in this area and education.

For the first time this year, states receive a comprehensive score (from 0 to 1,000) in the *Data Book*, not just a ranking. The scores track 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors — over a five-year period from 2019 to 2024. The new scoring system shows whether policies and public investment are actually improving children's lives, not merely how states compare to each other. **Virginia** received an overall score of **661, 114 points above the national score of 547. The commonwealth's highest score was in the family and community domain, where Virginia received 750.**

The scores help illustrate where Virginia must continue to invest, where the commonwealth has improved, and where greater support is needed. From 2019 to 2024, Virginia's education score decreased by 170 points, from 640 to 470, and its economic well-being score decreased by 18 points, falling from 714 to 696. Both declines were larger than national trends. At the same time, Virginia's health score increased by 92 points to 730, even as the national health scores declined. Together, the data show **Virginia** leaders must do more to **invest in education and economic security while building on policy choices that have supported gains in children's health.**

"The release of index scores this year is game-changing, as it allows us to make a stronger case to policymakers **that the time is now for additional investments in education and economic justice in Virginia.** This could look like **expanding the child tax credit and implementing a fair share tax, which would generate billions of dollars to invest in public schools and early childhood, without increasing the financial burden on working families,**" said Dr. Liz Nigro, Director of Research for Voices for Virginia's Children, Virginia's member of the Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT network.

Voices' Chief Executive Officer, Rachael Deane, added, "We know children and families need a solid foundation: **stable housing, fully funded schools, nutritious food, meaningful relationships and opportunities to learn, play and grow.** Policies that meet these needs are smart investments, fostering long-term gains like employment and economic growth."

In its 37th 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 Virginia's Children encourages lawmakers and officials in Virginia 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.

With the release of this year's Data Book, Voices for Virginia's Children urges policymakers to use these findings as a roadmap for action by increasing investments in family economic support, early childhood, and K–12 education. Voices will continue working with partners, policymakers, and communities to advance policy solutions during the 2027 General Assembly session that help every young person in Virginia thrive.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2026 *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.