IDAHO’S PROGRESS ON ECONOMIC WELL BEING IMPERILED BY PANDEMIC AND HIGH HOUSING COSTS

Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 50-State Data Report Confirms Urgent Need To Make Game-Changing Expanded Child Tax Credit Permanent

Boise, Idaho — Idaho was improving on children living in poverty immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic but was struggling on households with a high housing cost burden, according to the 2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how families have fared between the Great Recession and the COVID-19 crisis.

This year’s Data Book shows nearly a decade of progress could be erased by the COVID-19 pandemic and high housing costs unless policymakers act boldly to sustain the beginnings of a recovery. Immediately before the pandemic, 13 percent of Idaho’s children lived in households with an income below the poverty line, compared to 17 percent of all children in the United States. Between 2010 and 2019, Idaho’s child poverty rate declined by almost one-third.

“While Idaho has been experiencing a decline in child poverty rates over the last decade, high housing costs have become a major burden on family economic well-being across the state,” explained Christine Tiddens, director of Idaho Voices for Children, the state’s member of the KIDS COUNT network. “Idaho households were struggling with high housing cost burdens before the pandemic, but over the last year, the number of families unable to pay rent increased by 15 percent. Today, almost one in three Idaho renters with children struggle to pay rent.”

2021 KIDS COUNT Data Book examines Idaho’s child well-being.

The Data Book shows simply returning to a pre-pandemic level of support for children and families would shortchange millions of kids nationwide and fail to address persistent disparities. Sixteen indicators measuring four domains – economic well-being, education, health, and family and community context – are used by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in each year’s Data Book to assess child well-being. The annual KIDS COUNT data and rankings represent the most recent information available but do not capture the impact of the past year:

► ECONOMIC WELL BEING: Idaho ranked 12th in the nation on the Data Book economic well-being domain. In 2019, 58,000 Idaho children (13 percent) lived in households with an income below the poverty line. At the same time, 109,000 Idaho children (24 percent) lived in households that spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

► EDUCATION: Idaho ranked 38th in the nation on the Data Book education domain. In 2019, 32,000 young Idaho children (64 percent) were not in school. Once in school, 63 percent of fourth graders scored below proficient reading level in 2019, and 63 percent of
eight graders scored below proficient math level in 2019. Additionally, 19 percent of high schoolers were not graduating on time.

- **AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE:** Idaho ranked 19th in the nation on the *Data Book* affordable health care domain. In 2019, five percent of children were uninsured in Idaho, an improvement of six percentage points from 2010. Seven percent of Idaho babies were born with a low-birthweight in 2019, and 29 percent of teens ages 10 to 17 were overweight or obese.

- **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT:** Idaho ranked 8th in the nation on the *Data Book* family and community context domain. Teen birth rates decreased by 55 percent between 2010 and 2019, with 917 teen births in 2019. In 2019, 14,000 children (three percent) lived in high poverty areas.

Survey data from the last year add to the story of Idaho’s children and families in this moment:

- **HOUSING AFFORDABILITY:** During the pandemic, in May 2020, 38,000 Idaho renters with children in the household had “no confidence” or “slight confidence” to pay next month’s rent, representing 28 percent of renters with children in the household. By May 2021, this figure had increased to 32 percent of renters with children in the household.

- **FOOD SECURITY:** During the pandemic, in May 2020, 37,000 Idaho households with children reported that “the children were not eating enough because we just couldn’t afford enough food,” representing seven percent of households with children. By May 2021, this figure had increased to 10 percent of households with children.

- **HEALTH COVERAGE:** During the pandemic, in May 2020, 11,500 Idaho adults with children in the household lacked health insurance. By May 2021, this figure had decreased to 7,800 Idaho adults with children.

Today, June 21, the federal government launched a new website and other resources for parents and caregivers eligible for an expanded child tax credit.

The child tax credit has been improved and expanded to deliver immediate, monthly help -- $300 a month for kids under 6 and $250 for older children -- to 39 million families, covering almost 90 percent of the children in the United States. This support will arrive sooner and is now fully refundable, which means even families who do not earn enough to owe federal income taxes can access this credit.

“The expanded child tax credit is a game-changer for Idaho families. The monthly direct cash payments are aimed at helping working families and middle-class families succeed,” said Christine Tiddens. “One third of Idaho adults with children have told us they are struggling to pay for rent. The advance child tax credit will deliver critical financial support to families struggling with expenses like rent, child care and other basics.”

For decades, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has advocated for a larger child tax credit as a way to help families with the basics, and making this policy permanent is the primary recommendation of the 2021 *Kids Count Data Book*.
“The COVID-19 crisis has brought many families to the breaking point, especially parents and caregivers who have lost jobs and income,” said Lisa Hamilton, president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Making the expanded child tax credit permanent will continue providing critical financial support for families who are struggling to make ends meet and help reduce long-standing disparities that affect millions of families of color.”

Parents who want to learn more about the child tax credit, eligibility and how to make sure they receive payments should go to childtaxcredit.gov. The Annie E. Casey Foundation also has more information about the child tax credit for parents, caregivers and the media at aecf.org/databook.

“The expanded child tax credit is a down payment on ending child poverty. $300 a month will be life-changing for Idaho families working hard to find stability. We are calling on Idaho’s members of Congress to invest in our future and make the expansion permanent,” concluded Christine Tiddens.

Release Information
The 2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book will be available June 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at http://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.kidscount.org.

About Idaho Voices for Children
Idaho Voices for Children works to develop and promote a statewide public policy agenda that advocates for children on issues of health, education, safety, well-being and family economic security. Learn more at idahovoice.org.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation
The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s children 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.