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UNDER EMBARGO Until June 14, 2023 at 12:01 a.m. ET

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Missouri Ranks 28th in Child Well-Being, but Inaccessible, Unaffordable Child Care Pushes Parents to the Breaking Point

50-State Data Show Economy Loses \$122 Billion a Year as Child Care Challenges Cause Parents to Miss, Quit or Scale Back Work, Annie E. Casey Foundation Finds

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI — Missouri ranks 28th in child well-being, according to the **2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how children and families are faring. Additionally, our country's lack of affordable and accessible child care short-changes children and causes parents in Missouri to frequently miss work or even quit their jobs, while those who can find care are paying dearly for it. These child care challenges cost the American economy billions of dollars each year and force families to juggle professional growth opportunities and child rearing responsibilities.

"The high cost of child care is not just a financial burden on families. It is a societal issue that affects our economy, our workforce, and the future of our children. Accessible and affordable child care should be readily available and affordable for all Missourians," said Tracy Greever-Rice, Program Director of Missouri KIDS COUNT.

The *Data Book* reports too many parents cannot secure child care that is compatible with work schedules and commutes. The *Data Book* reports that in 2020–21, 10% of Missouri children ages birth to five lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care. And women are five to eight times more likely than men to experience negative employment consequences related to caregiving.

Even if parents can find an opening at child care near their home, they often can't pay for it. Missouri's average cost of center-based child care for a toddler was \$8,862, 9% of the median income of a married couple and 28% of a single mother's income in the state.

While the cost of care burdens families, child care workers are paid worse than 98% of professions. Median national pay for child care workers was \$28,520 per year or \$13.71 an hour in 2022, less than the wage for retail (\$14.26) and customer service (\$18.16) workers.

The failings of the child care market also affect the current and future health of the American economy, costing \$122 billion a year in lost earnings, productivity and tax revenue, according to one study. All of these challenges put parents under tremendous stress to meet the dual responsibilities of providing for their families and ensuring their children are safe and nurtured.

Each year, the *Data Book* ranks the states according to how children are faring, presenting national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains: economic well-being (Missouri



ranked 18th), education (22nd), health (35th), and family and community factors (25th). Missouri's overall rank of 28th reflects both areas of strength and ways the state can bolster its policies that support child well-being.

"The Annie E. Casey Foundation's national Data Book provides a critical tool for policymakers, advocates, and communities to understand the challenges facing children and families across the country. We are grateful for this valuable resource that enables us to make informed decisions and take targeted actions to improve the well-being of Missouri's families." said William Dent, Executive Director of the Family and Community Trust.

Transitioning from a faltering child care system to creating a flourishing one will take new thinking and investing at the local, state, and national levels. An executive order issued by President Biden in April is aimed at expanding access, lowering costs, and raising wages. It could prove to be a helpful framework, but more is needed:

- Federal, state, and local governments should invest more in child care. State and local governments should maximize remaining pandemic recovery act dollars to fund needed child care services and capacity. Congress should reauthorize and strengthen the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, and increase funding for public pre-kindergarten and Head Start.
- Public and private leaders should work together to improve the infrastructure for home-based child care, beginning by lowering the barriers to entry for potential providers by increasing access to start-up and expansion capital.
- To help young parents, Congress should expand the federal Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, which serves student parents.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2023 KIDS COUNT® *Data Book* will be available at www.aecf.org. 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 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY TRUST

The Family and Community Trust (FACT) serves as the affiliate for Missouri KIDS COUNT. The Family and Community Trust is the state level, private and public organization that governs a network of twenty Community Partnerships focused on achieving better results for children and families. FACT's KIDS COUNT initiative focuses on child well-being in Missouri. To read data informed stories and access specific data and information about the well-being of children in our state, visit mokidscount.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



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