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Rhode Island has Large Racial Disparities in Concentrated Child Poverty, According to New Data Snapshot from the Annie E. Casey Foundation

Rhode Island is one of 11 states to Have No Change in its Concentrated Child Poverty Rate and Has Wide Disparities in Concentrated Child Poverty by Race and Ethnicity

Providence, Rhode Island (September 24, 2019)— New KIDS COUNT Data show racial disparities persist, according to “Children Living in High Poverty, Low-Opportunity Neighborhoods,” a new KIDS COUNT® data snapshot released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Using the latest data available from the U.S. Census Bureau, the snapshot examines where concentrated poverty has worsened across the country despite a long period of national economic expansion.

Growing up in a community of concentrated poverty — that is, a neighborhood where 30 percent or more of the population is living in poverty — is one of the greatest risks to child development. Alarming, more than 8.5 million children live in these settings. That’s nearly 12 percent of all children in the United States and 13 percent of all children (28,000 children total) in Rhode Island.

The publication finds that racial disparities in concentrated poverty are prevalent and persistent. In the United States between 2013 - 2017:

- 6% of Asian children
- 28% of Black children
- 19% of Hispanic children
- 4% of White children lived in concentrated poverty.

Rhode Island has deeper disparities than the country as a whole. Between 2013-2017:

- 10% of Asian children
- 34% of Black children
- 32% of Hispanic children
- 3% of White children lived in concentrated poverty.

“All of Rhode Island’s children deserve to live in communities where they can learn, play, and grow, but far too many of our children, particularly children of color, live in areas of concentrated poverty and do not have these opportunities,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “About one-third of Latino children (32%) and Black children (34%) in Rhode Island live in concentrated poverty. Children thrive

when they grow up in neighborhoods with high-quality schools, abundant job opportunities, reliable transportation, and safe places for recreation. We must expand options for low-income families to move to areas that already have the resources needed for them to thrive. We can do this by expanding access to affordable housing and by ending housing discrimination.”

Children in high-poverty neighborhoods tend to lack access to healthy food and quality medical care and they often face greater exposure to environmental hazards, such as poor air quality, and toxins such as lead. Financial hardships and fear of violence can cause chronic stress linked to diabetes, heart disease and stroke. And when these children grow up, they are more likely to have lower incomes than children who have relocated away from communities of concentrated poverty.

Key findings from the snapshot include:

- Overall, urban areas have both the largest number and share of children living in concentrated poverty: 5.4 million, or 23 percent of all kids in cities. About 11 percent of kids (1.2 million) in rural areas live in poor communities, while 5 percent of suburban kids (2 million) do.
- States in the South and West tend to have high rates of children living in concentrated poverty, making up 17 of 25 states with rates of 10 percent and above.
- African American and American Indian children are seven times more likely to live in poor neighborhoods than white children and Latino children are nearly five times more likely, largely as a result of legacies of racial and ethnic oppression as well as present-day laws, practices and stereotypes that disproportionately affect people of color.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT joins the Casey Foundation in calling on national, state and local stakeholders to act now to help families lift themselves out of these circumstances. Policies at the community, county and state level that can have a significant impact on the lives of children in struggling families include:

- Supporting development and property-ownership models that preserve affordable housing, such as community land trusts and limited-equity cooperatives.
- Ending housing discrimination based on whether a person was formerly incarcerated or is using a federal housing voucher.
- Assisting low-income residents in paying higher property taxes that often come with new development/redevelopment or with a family’s relocation to a more affluent area.
- Expanding workforce training that is targeted to high-poverty, low-opportunity communities.
- Requiring and incentivizing anchor institutions to hire locally and contract with businesses owned by women and people of color.
- Developing and funding small-business loan programs that serve entrepreneurs in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color — or people that traditional lenders tend to reject, such as individuals with poor credit or criminal records.

About Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, education, safety and development of Rhode Island's children and youth. It is one of 50 state-level organizations that work in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the social condition of children at the state and local level across the country. Please visit www.rikidscount.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.

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