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**New Census Data Shows:
Rhode Island Ranked 3rd in Children's Health Insurance
Coverage; Child Poverty and Extreme Poverty Increases**

***97.8% of Rhode Island children had health insurance coverage in 2018,
Rhode Island ranks 3rd among states***

18.0% of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty in 2018

Providence, RI (September 26, 2019) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released new data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) today. The ACS provides national and state-level data on health insurance coverage, poverty, and income.

In 2018, 18.0% – an estimated 36,135 – of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty. This is an increase from 2017, when 16.6% of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty.

Health Insurance Data

Children who have health insurance coverage are healthier and have fewer preventable hospitalizations. They are more likely to receive preventive care, be screened for the achievement of developmental milestones, miss fewer days of school and get treatment for illnesses and chronic conditions. Uninsured children are less likely to have medical homes and have fewer visits to doctors or dentists.

According to the ACS, in 2018:

- 97.8% of Rhode Island's children had health insurance coverage, and 2.2% (an estimated 4,785 children) Rhode Island children lacked health insurance coverage.
- This is essentially unchanged from last year's ACS.
- 5.2% of all U.S. children lacked health insurance coverage.
- Rhode Island ranks 3rd best among all states and 3rd in New England for children's health insurance coverage.

- Of the children who had health insurance in Rhode Island in 2018, 38.9% had coverage through Medicaid/Rite Care.

“These data show that Rhode Island’s long-standing commitment to children’s health insurance coverage is paying off,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “Rhode Island’s ranking of 3rd best among all states for the percentage of children with health coverage is great news for Rhode Island’s children and families. Children need access to regular, high quality health care so they can have a strong start in life. This is particularly good news given data released earlier this month that shows that the national uninsured rate increased for the first time since 2008-2009.”

Poverty Data

Children in poverty, especially those who experience poverty in early childhood and for extended periods, are more likely to have physical and behavioral health problems, experience difficulty in school, become teen parents, and earn less or be unemployed as adults.

According to the ACS, in 2018:

- 18.0% – an estimated 36,135 – of Rhode Island’s children lived in poverty in 2018. This is an increase from 2017, when 16.6% of Rhode Island’s children lived in poverty.
 - The poverty data are based on the federal poverty threshold, which was an annual income of \$20,231 for a family of three with two children and \$25,465 for a family of four with two children in 2018.
- 8.2% – an estimated 16,505 – of Rhode Island’s children lived in extreme poverty in 2018.
 - This is an increase from 2017, when 5.3% - and estimated 10,761 - of Rhode Island’s children lived in extreme poverty.
 - Extreme poverty is defined as families with incomes below 50% of the federal poverty level, or \$10,116 for a family of three with two children and \$12,733 for a family of four with two children in 2018.
- Rhode Island ranks 28th in the nation — and 6th in New England — for the percentage of children in poverty.

“It’s alarming that the latest data on Rhode Island’s child poverty rate shows an increase from last year,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “Of particular concern is the increase in children living in extreme poverty. The fact that nearly 6,000 **more** children in Rhode Island live in households with incomes below \$12,000 per year is a stark reminder that there is more work to do. Growing up in

poverty is a serious risk to healthy development and can have lifelong negative effects on their future.”

“A recent National Academies of Sciences report recommended strategies to reduce the number of children living in poverty by half in 10 years, including expanding the Child Care Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit, increasing access to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and housing vouchers for low-income families, restoring access to benefits for legal immigrants, and increasing the minimum wage.”

“It is also important to note that education is the way out of poverty. Rhode Island needs to invest in two-generation education strategies for entire families to succeed. Rhode Island can take meaningful steps toward this goal by improving Pre-K-12 education, and increasing the education levels and job skills of today’s parents so they can provide for their families and qualify for higher paying jobs.”

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.