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180,000 Children Live in Maryland's Low-Income Working Families Today, More Than in Midst of Great Recession

State policies that focus simultaneously on children and their parents can help more families enjoy the nation's growing prosperity, according to new KIDS COUNT Data Book

BALTIMORE – About 180,000 Maryland children live in low-income working families today, more than its peak during the Great Recession, according to the newly released 2015 *KIDS COUNT*® *Data Book* from [the Annie E. Casey Foundation](#). This number represents 14 percent of all children living in Maryland.

“Although Maryland ranked eleventh overall, we are shocked that there are more children living in poverty now than in the midst of the recession in 2008,” said Nonso Umunna, research director at Advocates for Children and Youth. “It is clear that the economic recovery has bypassed our children, leaving families struggling to provide for basic living expenses.”

The 2015 *Data Book*, which focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, measures child well-being in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. The Casey Foundation report finds that the rising tide of recovery, with both increased employment and more concentrated wealth, has left stagnant pockets of low-income, struggling communities and families, where a child's future is anchored in scarcity and hardship.

“The good news is that when we invest in the right strategies and policies, we can make a difference for kids,” said Umunna.

For instance, the percentage of Maryland's children lacking health insurance has fallen to 4 percent down from 5 percent in 2008. Also there have been improvements in reading proficiency and more students graduating from high school on time.

These improvements are encouraging, however, there is still much to do to ensure that Maryland's families and children become stronger.

Solutions that provide opportunity for all children

State-level policies have proved that investments in health and education can create lasting positive differences for children. The Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP), which provides low-cost health coverage to children has drastically reduced the number of children without health insurance. In addition, tax credits and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) have helped to lift people out of

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poverty; however even with these resources, millions of low-income families still struggle with basic provisioning for their children.

The Casey Foundation offers a number of recommendations to make good on the American promise of opportunity for all children. The Foundation promotes a two-generation strategy that simultaneously addresses the needs of children directly while providing tools and resources to their parents. Three critical strategies include:

- Provide parents with multiple pathways to get family-supporting jobs and achieve financial stability.
- Ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and enriching elementary school experiences.
- Equip parents to better support their children socially and emotionally and to advocate for their kids' education.

The Casey Foundation recommends policies that promote higher pay, paid sick leave, flexible scheduling and expanded unemployment benefits that will result in higher family income, reduced parental stress and an increased capacity of parents to invest in their kids. Detailed recommendations can be found in the 2014 report, [Creating Opportunity for Families: A Two-Generation Approach.](#)

The 2015 Data Book will be available July 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices, <http://mobile.kidscount.org>.

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.

Advocates for Children and Youth improves the lives and experiences of Maryland's children through policy change and program improvement.

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