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Rollback of Programs Would Deepen Disparities Between Wisconsin's Children

2017 *Race for Results* report shows an alarming gap between children of color and their white peers

MADISON, WI – Wisconsin is failing its children of color, particularly African American children, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *2017 Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children* report. Locally and nationally, policymakers have made it a priority to roll back programs and policies that provide opportunities for children and families like public investments in education, affordable and accessible health care, and safety net programs. However, a new report shows divesting from these programs will create even larger gaps between Wisconsin's white children and its children of color, and it will put the economic stability of the state in jeopardy.

"According to *2017 Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children*, a report released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the gap in well-being between the state's white and African American children is the largest in the nation. In addition, Wisconsin's Hispanic, American Indian, and Hmong children also face significant challenges to well-being.

The report shows just how far Wisconsin lags in offering every child in the state an excellent K-12 education and a strong pathway to economic success. In Wisconsin, just 64 percent of African American students graduate high school on time, compared to 93 percent of white non-Hispanic students. Only 78 percent of Hispanic and American Indian students graduate on time.

In addition, while there has been a great focus by Gov. Scott Walker and the state legislature to invest billions of dollars into large corporations with the hopes of job creation, policymakers should consider investing in children and families to help boost the economy, especially for those that have been systematically left behind because of inequitable policies.

"For children and families to be successful, it takes family supporting jobs, high-quality education, and targeted support for working parents," said Ken Taylor, executive director of Kids Forward. "But the problem is that those things are not available across races and ethnicities. The policies and systems

we have created make the things essential for well-being much more available to white children, families, and communities.”

A priority for policymakers should be addressing the shocking poverty gap that exists in Wisconsin. According to the report, 72 percent of white children in Wisconsin live in families that are economically secure compared to just 24 percent of African American children, 30 percent of Latino children, 31 percent of Hmong children, and 36 percent of American Indian children. (Economically secure means having incomes 200 percent or more than the federal poverty level. For example, a family of four that makes \$49,200 would be 200 percent the federal poverty level).

This is the second *Race for Results* report by the Casey Foundation; the Foundation released the first report in 2014. The report measures children’s progress on the national and state levels on key education, health, and economic milestones by racial and ethnic groups. The report’s index uses a composite score of these milestones on a scale of one (lowest) to 1,000 (highest) to make comparisons. (Please see the chart at the bottom of the press release for a visual guide to Wisconsin’s well-being rankings.)

The *Race for Results* report also highlights the barriers children from immigrant families face and encourages policymakers in Wisconsin to create policies and programs that present immigrant families with opportunities for learning, developing, and contributing to the well-being of the state. Wisconsin is home to 143,000 children who are from immigrant families—11 percent of all Wisconsin children. Fifty-six percent of children in immigrant families are financially insecure compared to 36 percent of children in non-immigrants families.

“To live up to our reputation as a state that genuinely cares about children and families, we need to do a better job of addressing the obstacles immigrant families face and show that we care about children,” said Taylor. “We can start by refusing to demonize immigrants and by refusing to implement policies that criminalize and tear apart families—families who work hard and are integral parts of so many communities here in the state.”

Kids Forward recommends that policymakers begin addressing the gap in well-being for both children of color and children in immigrant families by:

- Increasing the state’s minimum wage to a family supporting wage so that parents can secure employment that allows them to support their families.
- Investing in public education, especially programs that provide access to a high-quality, culturally and linguistically appropriate education for children of color so that every child in the state can reach key developmental milestones.
- Advocating and implementing policies that support the success of immigrant families and opposing anti-immigration policies at both the state and federal levels.

Release Information

The 2017 *Race for Results* report will be available October 24 at 12:01 am EDT at www.aecf.org/raceforresults. Additional information will be available at www.aecf.org. The website also contains the most recent national, state, and local data on numerous indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs, and rankings in stories about *Race for Results* can use the Data Center at www.datacenter.kidscount.org.

About Kids Forward

Kids Forward, formerly the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, advocates for effective, long-lasting solutions that break down barriers to success for children and families in Wisconsin. Using research and a community-informed approach, Kids Forward works to help every kid, every family, and every community.

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 to 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.

