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Midland County sees 10 percent increase in child poverty, ranks 6th in child well-being

LANSING—Child poverty went up in 80 of 83 Michigan counties since 2006, including Midland County, according to the Kids Count in Michigan Data Book 2016 released today by the Michigan League for Public Policy.

In Midland County, 14.8 percent of children lived in poverty in 2014, a 10 percent increase from nine years ago. Overall, Midland County ranked 6th for child well-being by county, with No. 1 the best in the state. That top ranking went to Livingston County for the second year in a row. For child poverty, Midland County ranked 8th among the counties.

Statewide, all three measures of economic security worsened significantly over the trend period (2006-2014), including a 23 percent increase in the rate of child poverty. The rate of child abuse and neglect also rose, up 29 percent statewide, with a rate of 14.7 per 1,000 kids for 2014. For Midland County, the rate of child abuse and neglect was 10.1 per 1,000 kids.

"We think all kids count—no matter where they live, their racial or ethnic back-ground, or their family income—but do the elected officials charged with supporting their well-being share that priority?" said Alicia Guevara Warren, Kids Count in Michigan project director at the Michigan League for Public Policy. "This book is not meant to be simply a reporting tool, but a catalyst for action. If legislators are truly concerned with child well-being, they have to address income and racial disparities, and invest in proven two-generation strategies that help kids by helping their parents."

Some of the Kids Count in Michigan Data Book's key recommendations to policymakers on supporting parents and improving child well-being are:

- Invest in communities to create safe neighborhoods, clean air and water, quality schools and adequate police and fire services;

- Strengthen policies that support work, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, earned paid sick leave and workforce development opportunities;

- Promote comprehensive strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect, including providing mental health and substance abuse services for parents;

- Ensure access to affordable, quality child care; and

- Adequately fund public schools, targeting resources in high-need areas and providing early interventions and services.

"The Michigan League for Public Policy has been producing the Kids Count report for 25 years, but low-income kids are still struggling, and the repercussions touch every part of their lives," said Gilda Z. Jacobs, president and CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy. "The Flint water crisis and the horrendous conditions in Detroit Public Schools show just how low a priority protecting kids has become. Lawmakers have a responsibility to protect Michigan kids, and with this book, we provide the information and recommendations for how they can do that."

The Michigan League for Public Policy has been compiling and releasing the annual Kids Count in Michigan Data Book for 25 years to analyze and evaluate the well-being of children in the state and its counties. The 2016 book primarily compares data from 2006 to 2014 and analyzes 16 key indicators across four domains: 1) economic security; 2) health and safety; 3) family and community; and 4) education. The overall child well-being rank is based on a county's rank in each of the 16 measures.

For additional information on the Kids Count in Michigan Data Book 2016, including the full report, state, county and regional rankings, charts and images, and resources for advocates, go to http://www.mlpp.org/kids-count/michigan-2/mi-data-book-2016.

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