

Amid Mounting National Tensions, D.C. Children in Immigrant Families Fare Better Than Their Peers in Other States

2017 Race for Results report highlights the importance of policies that level the playing field for all children

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The District of Columbia’s vitality and prosperity depend on the success of all children. In a new report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the District stands out for its leadership in working to combat inequities and ensure all children and their families have access to core supports promoting health, education and well-being.

The report, 2017 [Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children](#), reveals a nationwide gulf in prosperity for children in immigrant families with approximately 53 percent living in poverty. In the District, more than 40 percent of children in immigrant families live in poverty. While better than the national average, D.C. must continuously seek to implement policies and programs that emphasize protection and support for the 28,000 children living in immigrant families; these policies and programs must prioritize their needs and the needs of their parents and caregivers.

While the *Race for Results* report also shares that many immigrant children across the country face barriers in accessing high-quality education, District children do not have the same experience. Children living in immigrant families in the District are enrolled in early childhood education programs at a significantly higher rate than the national average (82 percent vs. 59 percent, respectively). The District can attribute these gains to intentional policies and programs designed to support all children, such as universal Pre-K for all 3- and 4-year-olds and D.C. Healthy Families, which provides access to health care so children are healthy and prepared to enroll in school.

“It is no coincidence that D.C. children living in immigrant families are faring better than many across the nation. We applaud the District for taking steps to protect and support children and their families, regardless of their immigration status,” said Shana Bartley, Acting Executive Director of DC Action for Children.

Though District leaders have made significant steps towards leveling the playing field for children in immigrant families, there is still work to be done. Drawing upon her work with Hispanic and Latino families, Executive Director of Jubilee JumpStart, Dee Dee Parker Wright, urges legislators to “reject a ‘one-size fits all’ perspective and consider crafting policy solutions that address the unique challenges immigrants of diverse countries of origin face.”

Neel Saxena, Executive Director of Asian American LEAD elaborates, “Immigrant communities face challenges that are unique to their ethnic group and are often overlooked. The Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants that we work with counter the model minority myth and face numerous obstacles, such as linguistic barriers in housing programs and accessing culturally-appropriate mental health services.”

The *Race for Results* [report](#) measures children’s progress at national and state levels on key education, health and economic milestones by racial and ethnic groups. The report calls for

legislators to back policies that protect families and reduce barriers facing immigrant children, which include reducing familial separation, educational hurdles and chronic poverty.

The *Race for Results* report makes three recommendations to help ensure all children and their families are afforded opportunities to reach their full potential:

- Keep families together and in their communities — Keeping children with their families enables them to meet developmental milestones and lets parents address the needs of their children.
- Help children in immigrant families meet key developmental milestones —The overall well-being of children is key to our nation's future and is influenced by their environments. We must choose policies that make those environments supportive and healthy.
- Increase economic opportunity for immigrant parents — Meaningful programs and policies that improve opportunities for low-income workers and deal with the need of families save taxpayers by reducing the costs of safety-net program.

About DC Action for Children

Founded in 1992, DC Action for Children is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization focused on improving conditions and outcomes for the District's children, youth and families through public awareness, policy, research and technical assistance. DC Action is the KIDS COUNT grantee for the District, tracking key indicators of child and youth well-being and neighborhood well-being for children and youth. Follow us on Twitter at @ActforDChildren and like us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/dcaction>

About Asian American LEAD

Founded in 1998, Asian American LEAD supports low-income and underserved Asian Pacific American (APA) youth with academic development, decision-making around their educational future, leadership skills, and improved healthy concepts of self through after school, mentoring, and summer programs. Follow us on Twitter & Instagram at @AALEAD and like us on Facebook & LinkedIn at AsianAmericanLEAD. For more information, visit us [here](#).

Jubilee Jumpstart

Jubilee JumpStart is an innovative early childhood education center which provides early education and the highest quality care focused on social and emotional well-being for the city's neediest children. Our mission is to prepare children from low-income families for success in school and life. Learn more [here](#) and follow us on Facebook and Twitter @JubileeJumpStrt.

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.