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PRESS RELEASE

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Census analysis highlights lower poverty and higher incomes, although racial disparities persist
Recent progress in jeopardy as General Assembly and Congress consider program cuts

NEW HAVEN – The share of Connecticut adults and children living in poverty and individuals lacking health insurance decreased in 2016, according to a new analysis of Census data from Connecticut Voices for Children. Median household income remained flat on average, although white and Latino families saw significant increases. Racial and ethnic disparities decreased slightly and unevenly across the four indicators, but there are still wide economic gaps between white residents and people of color.

“That the Census shows that Connecticut’s racial disparities are closing is great news,” says Ray Noonan, Associate Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children. “Closing the gap has long-term positive impacts on the state as a whole. For instance, children that grow up in poverty are far more likely to struggle in school. Lifting children out of poverty ensures that they can live up to their full potential.”

Despite the steady progress, the report warns that policy changes both at the state and national level could undo some of these gains. The last state budget agreement included tax increases on low-income families (through a reduction of the state Earned Income Tax Credit), cuts to several key programs that support low-income children and families, and key investments like education. At the federal level, Congress has moved to cut and failed to reauthorize vital programs.

“Recent policy changes are likely to curtail access to health insurance in the coming years,” says Karen Siegel, Health Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children. “At the federal level, changes in the Affordable Care Act’s individual mandate will likely make health insurance more expensive in the near future. In Connecticut, changes to HUSKY for parents will leave several thousand families with incomplete coverage, likely leading to higher medical costs in the future.”

Here are the main findings from the report:

- Overall poverty in Connecticut dropped from 2015 to 2016 from 10.5 percent to 9.8 percent, with Latino residents experiencing a significant decline. The poverty rate for Latino residents is more than three times the rate for white residents; Black residents are close to three times as likely to be poor as their white counterparts.
- Child poverty in Connecticut decreased from 14.5 percent to 12.9 percent, with disparities between white residents and their Black and Latino counterparts decreasing as well.
- Connecticut’s overall median household income remained flat over the last year, with only white and Latino residents seeing gains.
- Connecticut maintains one of the nation’s lowest rates of uninsurance for both adults and children. For Black residents, the uninsured rate is two times that of white residents. For Latino residents, it is four times larger.

About Connecticut Voices for Children: Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. In furtherance of its mission, Connecticut Voices for Children produces high-quality research and analysis, promotes citizen education, advocates for policy change at the state and local level, and works to develop the next generation of leaders.