



## For Immediate Release

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## **Low-Wage Jobs Define Economic Landscape in Idaho *Gem State also ranks low for college completion and last nationally in early education***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Although Idaho employers are doing well, many Idahoans are still stuck in low-wage jobs, according to a report released today by Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED).

According to the report, 45.5% of Idaho's households are locked into a "new normal" of perpetual financial insecurity, unable to build the savings needed to last even three months in the event of an emergency. The research, reflected in CFED's 2016 *Assets & Opportunity Scorecard*, also found that state policies are doing little to improve the financial security of Idahoans.

Overall, Idaho's performance on CFED's outcome measures worsened, plunging from 12th in the nation in 2015 to 21<sup>st</sup> this year. The state received its lowest marks in Education, ranking 37<sup>th</sup> and receiving a "D," due in part to having the nation's lowest percentage of three- and four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education programs in the nation (30.3%). Further, Idaho ranks 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup>, respectively, when it comes to the percentage of residents holding two- and four-year college degrees.

On the positive side, Idaho ranks second in the Housing & Homeownership issue area, thanks in part to a high homeownership rate (68.0%, compared to 63.1% nationally). Idaho receives a "B" in the Businesses & Jobs category, driven primarily by the state's higher-than-average small business ownership rate (1.58%, ranked 9<sup>th</sup>) and business creation rate (ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>), with 14.1 businesses opened per 1,000 people. Idaho receives a "C" in the areas of Financial Assets & Income and Health Care.

"We are pleased that Idaho ranks so well when it comes to business and jobs, however we still have much work to do when it comes to raising incomes so that our workers are paid a living wage. Idaho continues to lag behind the rest of the nation when it comes to income from work and this compounds the issue of financial security when families are just struggling to pay basic expenses," said Jessica Sotelo, Executive Director of Partners for Prosperity.

Published annually, the *Assets & Opportunity Scorecard* offers the most comprehensive look available at Americans' ability to save and build wealth, stay out of poverty and create a more prosperous future. This year's *Scorecard* assesses all 50 states and the District of Columbia on 61 outcome measures spanning five issue areas: Financial Assets & Income, Businesses & Jobs, Housing & Homeownership, Health Care and Education. It also ranks the states on 69 policies that promote financial security. When it comes to outcomes, Vermont ranks at the top of the country overall, while Mississippi ranks last.

The *Scorecard* also evaluates 69 different policy measures to determine how well states are addressing the challenges facing their residents. Idaho has implemented only 19 of the 69 policies assessed, underscoring

the link between inadequate policies and ongoing challenges confronting the state's low- and moderate-income families. Idaho ranked in the lower half of states in three out of the five policy issue areas assessed by the *Scorecard*, including Financial Assets & Income (40<sup>th</sup>), Businesses & Jobs (27<sup>th</sup>) and Education (32<sup>nd</sup>). Housing & Homeownership and Health Care policies, both ranked 20<sup>th</sup>, were the only relative bright spots, but fewer than half (6 of 13) of the Housing & Homeownership policies assessed and only a quarter (1 of 4) of the Health Care policies assessed were adopted.

Across the nation, the *Scorecard* found scant evidence that federal and state governments were willing to embrace policies that would open new doors to greater financial security for those struggling the most in the American economy.

Among the key findings from this year's national *Scorecard*:

- Homeownership rates remain at historic lows, falling to 63.1% for the eighth consecutive year of decline and contributing to crowding and rising costs in the rental market.
- While the national unemployment rate has dropped to 5%, the underemployment rate is twice as high, at 10.8%. What's more, one-in-four jobs is in a low-wage occupation.
- Building up even a small amount of savings is a challenge for almost half the country. Some 44% of households are "liquid asset poor," meaning they have less than three months of savings to live at the poverty level if they suffer an income loss.

"There certainly are positive signs that the nation's economy is improving," noted Andrea Levere, President of CFED. "But there also is very compelling evidence that many households are stuck in a financial hole and are struggling to dig themselves out. State governments can play a critical role in helping them move on to firmer ground and a more prosperous future."

To read an analysis of key findings from the 2016 *Assets & Opportunity Scorecard*, [click here](#). To access the complete *Scorecard*, visit <http://scorecard.cfed.org>.

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*The Idaho Asset Building Network is a movement-oriented group of practitioners, advocates, policymakers and others statewide working to expand the reach and deepen the impact of asset-based strategies. The Network is guided by a group on the frontlines of service delivery, coalition building and policy advocacy.*

*The Idaho Asset Building Network is a member of the larger, nationwide Assets & Opportunity Network.*

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*CFED's work makes it possible for millions of people to achieve financial security and contribute to an opportunity economy. We scale innovative practical solutions that empower low- and moderate-income people to build wealth. We drive responsive policy change at all levels of government. We support the efforts of community leaders across the country to advance economic opportunity for all. Established in 1979 as the Corporation for Enterprise Development, CFED works nationally and internationally through its offices in Washington, DC; Durham, North Carolina, and San Francisco, California.*

*To improve policies and programs that promote financial security and opportunity, CFED is the backbone organization for a national Assets & Opportunity Network, which is comprised of nearly 2,000 advocates, service providers, researchers, financial institutions and others representing all 50 states and DC. To learn more about the Assets & Opportunity Network and to join, visit <http://assetsandopportunity.org/network>*