

**Embargoed for Release Until:**

**12:01 AM, March 14, 2007**

**For More Information, Contact:**

Janet Bauer, 503-873-1201

Chuck Sheketoff, 603-873-1201

## **New Report: Fewer Low-Income Parents Are Being Offered Health Insurance on the Job While Vast Majority of Uninsured Kids Live in Homes with a Worker**

(Silverton) As state and national lawmakers consider proposals to assure health care for children, and Oregonians gather at the state capitol on Wednesday to support coverage for all Oregon kids, a new analysis of federal data shows that children in Oregon families with modest incomes are increasingly being squeezed out of insurance coverage.

Working parents who earn modest incomes are experiencing erosion of employer-sponsored health benefits, according to an analysis of children's coverage sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The study notes that nationally, fewer than half – 47 percent – of parents in families earning less than twice the poverty level, or no more than about \$40,000 a year for a four person family, are offered health insurance through their employer, a nine percent drop since 1997.

By contrast, offers of health insurance to parents who earn at least four times the poverty level, or about \$80,000 or more a year, have seen only a two percent decline according to the report. Almost eight out of 10 – 78 percent – of those upper-income adults were offered health coverage by their employers.

The analysis of U.S. Census data also shows that, in Oregon, nearly two of every three uninsured kids live in low-income households. Specifically, the analysis shows that 63 percent of uninsured Oregon children aged 0 to 18 live in households with income below two-times the federal poverty level, or about \$40,000 a year for a family of four in 2005.

The bulk of uninsured low-income children in Oregon live in households with an adult who works full time, according to the report. The analysis found that almost three quarters of low-income uninsured Oregon children – 72 percent – live in a household where at least one person works full-time. According to the study, almost eight out of 10 uninsured children of all income levels live in a family with one full-time worker.

“As health insurance costs rise, parents with modest incomes are doubly squeezed,” said Janet Bauer, policy analyst with the Oregon Center for Public Policy. “Parents with modest incomes are less likely to be offered insurance on the job, and less able to afford to purchase it on their own for themselves and their children,” she said.

Signed into law in 1997, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) provides states, including Oregon, with funds to design a health insurance program for vulnerable children. In Oregon, the program is part of the Oregon Health Plan. The study shows that in 2005 over 52,000 Oregon children were enrolled in the SCHIP-funded program at some point during the year.

The federal SCHIP program is up for reauthorization in Congress this year. "In reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program, Congress should safeguard a strong partnership with states like Oregon that are taking steps to ensure that its kids are healthy so that they can succeed in school and have successful lives," said Bauer.

"Now that Oregon is taking the lead in covering kids, Congress should do its part to assist kids who are currently without health coverage," she added.

"Oregon's delegation in Washington, DC is well positioned to continue the success of SCHIP," noted Bauer. "Oregonians are looking to our entire delegation to ensure Oregon's low-income children overcome the health insurance squeeze," Bauer added.

The Robert Wood Johnson report also calculates that about 106,000 children in Oregon, or 12 percent of Oregon children ages 0 through 18, are uninsured, or about one in every eight kids in the state. This estimate from Census data is lower than the recently released 116,000 estimate from the Oregon Population Survey because the two surveys have different methodologies and survey questions. Most notably, the Census survey asks whether a person lacked health insurance the entire previous year, while the Oregon Population Survey asks whether a person is uninsured at the time of the survey telephone call.

The report was prepared by analysts at the State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC), located at the University of Minnesota. The report analyzes data from the U.S. Census Bureau (1998-2006 Current Population Surveys), U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (2002-2005), and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Health Interview Survey (1997 and 2005).

The ***Oregon Center for Public Policy*** does in-depth research and analysis on budget, tax, and economic issues. The Center's goal is to improve decision making and generate more opportunities for all Oregonians.

**Note to Reporters and Editors:** To obtain an embargoed copy of the Robert Wood Johnson report on March 13, send a request to [bwattknight@gymr.com](mailto:bwattknight@gymr.com). As of 12:01 AM, Wednesday, March 14th, the report can be found at [www.CoverTheUninsured.org](http://www.CoverTheUninsured.org).