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Oregon's Progress on Child Health Coverage Offers Hope
Statement by OCPP policy analyst Janet Bauer

Amid the slew of bleak statistics contained in today's U.S. Census data, one item shined brightly: a large drop in the share of Oregon children without health insurance.

The rate of uninsured Oregon children dropped from 10.4 percent in 2009 to 8.8 percent in 2010. Going back to 2008, when the rate stood at 12.1 percent, the decline is even more pronounced.

Oregon's remarkable progress in expanding health coverage for children demonstrates the important role that investments in public structures can play in improving the lives of Oregonians. The 2009 Oregon legislature and then-Governor Ted Kulongoski deserve much credit.

The Healthy Kids program they created expanded and improved existing public health insurance structures. It opened the Oregon Health Plan to children with income up to 200 percent of the federal poverty line (set at \$44,700 for a family of four in 2011), where before it only covered children with income up to 185 percent of poverty (\$41,348 for a family of four in 2011). The legislature also offered subsidies to children from families with somewhat higher income to help them purchase private insurance.

Oregon's progress in expanding health coverage for children demonstrates the important role that government can play in improving our lives, and offers hope that Oregon can tackle other serious social problems such as poverty.

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