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Oregon Earns a 'D' Grade in Child Well-Being for the Second Year in a Row

Children First for Oregon's annual report shows increasing health care for children should be the next step toward moving Oregon to an 'A'.

Portland, OR – October 20, 2008 – Oregon earned a grade of “D” in overall child well-being in the annual *Report Card on the Status of Children* issued today by the nonpartisan group Children First for Oregon. The grade remained the same as last year, though modest improvements were made in a number of categories.

The Health category is the only failing grade on the report, a result of Oregon's high number of uninsured children. Currently, over 100,000 children throughout the state are without health coverage, a number likely to rise as the economy weakens. “If we ever want Oregon to earn an ‘A’ in child well-being, we’ve got to finish the job and cover all kids,” said Robin Christian, Executive Director of Children First for Oregon.

The Child Welfare category shows the most important improvement for the year: the rate of child abuse and neglect has gone down for the first time in ten years. The Early Care and Education category also improved, going from a failing grade last year to a ‘D-’ this year. The grade change is the direct result of a \$39 million investment to expand the highly successful Head Start Program during the 2007 Legislature.

“A solid foundation for our state depends on strong families and communities,” said Christian. “We’ve made smart investments for children over the past couple of years. We must continue this momentum for positive change, particularly as more and more families struggle to make ends meet.”

Along with the report card release, Children First announced a new initiative, “Vision 2020: Moving Oregon to an ‘A,’” focused on raising the state's grade in child well-being.

– MORE –

Protecting smart investments in kids will build a solid foundation for Oregon. Here's what we can do...

1. **Defeat harmful ballot measures:** Oppose Measure 59 and 61 on the November ballot, which would devastate the gains made for kids over the past 18 months.
2. **Finish the job and cover all kids:** Every Oregon child needs health care coverage 365 days a year. Cover the more than 100,000 kids currently without coverage.
3. **Continue to improve the child welfare system:** Adapt best practices to report the child welfare system, making wise investments in prevention and ensuring every foster child is fully supported.

SUMMARY OF 2008 GRADES:

<u>Overall Grade</u>	D
Child Welfare	D+
Early Care and Education	D-
Family Financial Stability	C-
Health	F
Youth Development and Education	C-

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2008 REPORT CARD:

Positive Trends in Child Well-Being:

- More families are able to afford child care, up to 49.2% from 44.1%.
- Fewer children were abused or neglected, down from 12,043 to 10,716.
- Teen pregnancy is at a 18-year low, continuing a downward trend to 22.7 per 1,000 girls (ages 15-17) who become pregnant.

Negative Trends in Child Well-Being:

- Child poverty crept up slightly, from approximately 141,000 to 143,000 children who live in extreme poverty.
- 8th grade reading and math scores declined, from 68% to 65% and 70% to 69% meeting or exceeding state standards, respectively.
- Infant mortality increased, from 5.5 to 5.9 babies per 1,000 who die before their first birthday.

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*Children First works to make Oregon a place where all children thrive. **We** educate and engage Oregonians to promote programs and policies that **get results for kids**. KIDS COUNT is a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private charitable organization that funds a nationwide network of projects that support disadvantaged children and families. www.cffo.org.*