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Oregon Passed Largest Expansion of Health Insurance Coverage for Children Nationwide

Portland, OR – November 13, 2009 – According to the *2009 Progress Report: Children's Access to Health Coverage* issued today by the nonpartisan group Children First for Oregon, Oregon's children's health insurance eligibility expansion was the largest in the nation during 2009.

During the Legislative Session, Oregon's lawmakers made the commitment to ensure 95% of all Oregon kids have the health coverage they need for a healthy foundation in life. Thanks to the smart leadership of Oregon policymakers, Oregon is enrolling an additional 80,000 previously uninsured children, the largest number of new kids eligible in the country. 10,000 of the expected 80,000 newly eligible children have already enrolled in Oregon Healthy Kids.

"Children do better when they have the quality health care that gives them the healthy start they deserve," said Robin Christian, Executive Director of Children First for Oregon. "With coverage through Healthy Kids, they will grow up stronger, ready to learn and prepared to contribute to their communities."

Every year, Children First releases a report card on the status of children in the state. Last year, Oregon scored an "F" in Child Health. Oregon lawmakers responded by following the recommendation of Children First to offer comprehensive health coverage for children at a price families can afford.

"Covering children is also cost-effective," Christian added. "When kids have consistent health care, common childhood illnesses don't turn into chronic health problems and kids don't need costly emergency room care. Insuring kids is a win for kids, their families, and for Oregon."

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This year's report by Children First for Oregon highlights the significant progress Oregon has made compared to other states that expanded health coverage during 2009. Oregon is proving that the problem of uninsured kids is one that can be solved.

Highlights of the 2009 Progress Report:

- The next largest expansion after Oregon was Oklahoma who extended coverage to an additional 45,500 children. Montana expanded its coverage to another 32,800 children.
- Twelve other states made expansions in their eligibility.
- Every state held steady on their children's health programs without reducing eligibility levels.
- Fourteen states including Oregon passed measures to reduce enrollment barriers, making it easier for kids to access insurance.

Children First for Oregon will be celebrating the expansion of children's health care coverage and the release of their *2009 Progress Report: Children's Access to Health Coverage* on Monday, November 16th from 6-8 pm at the Heathman Hotel in Portland.

*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.*
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