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No relief for children of 75,000 families?

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A Children First for Oregon, our work is focused on a single mission: We're dedicated to the well-being of every child. We do our job by ensuring that policies and community responses improve the lives of children and families. There is no choosing for us — no matter what a family has, does to earn a living or looks like, we want public policy to work effectively so that every child has the opportunity to grow into a healthy, happy and productive adult.

Sadly, the tax cut legislation signed into law on May 28 makes it much more difficult for the children of 75,000 Oregon families to do just that.

These are hardworking families whose jobs pay close to the minimum wage. Many, but not all, pay federal and state income taxes and all pay federal Medicare and Social Security taxes. Yet, these families are not eligible for even a portion of the \$400 per child tax credit increase that the Bush administration and congressional supporters touted as a key selling point. (Amid a storm of criticism, the Senate voted overwhelmingly Thursday to expand the benefit for poor workers and some wealthy couples, but the outcome remains uncertain in the House.)

These are parents struggling to support a family on an income between \$10,500 and \$26,625 a year. Whether it's putting food on the table, protecting their children with quality



IN MY OPINION

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health care or finding affordable child care so they can keep their jobs, these are the parents facing a constant uphill battle. Of all the possible beneficiaries of the child tax credit, these are the families who need the money the most.

Ironically, the new tax law treats the children of Oregon's highest and lowest income families equally — and not because of a great egalitarian vision. A long-standing provision of the credit phases out eligibility for higher-income families. Yet, the tax credit provision for families earning minimum wage was dropped in the bill's final negotiations in order to cap the tax cut package at \$350 billion.

Treating the children of families at the opposite ends of the pay scale the same should look a lot different from this. Children First for Oregon takes great pride making sense of policy choices and explaining them to a statewide audience — even when we don't like them. The rationale behind the choice to cut children from low-income, working families out of the federal tax bill is inexplicable.

Our final analysis of this tax bill is that it's just bad public policy for all our children and for Oregon.

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