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# Study shows tight child-care market

Many Oregonians with below-average income face large bills for child care.

The Associated Press

**PORTLAND**—The cost of child care in Oregon has risen about 35 percent in the past decade, but relatively few day-care slots are available for the children of working parents, a report released Monday states.

In the annual "State of Oregon's Children," com-

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pled by the nonprofit Children First for Oregon, child-care affordability moved into the spotlight.

The report found that in the 2000 tax year, only 16 Oregon businesses took advantage of the state's tax break for employers who provide day-care assis-

## Suggestions for improvement

Children First officials listed several suggestions for improving Oregon's child-care system, including:

**GETTING** more businesses to use the state's tax-credit program for employee

tance to employees.

And a state program that provides day-care assistance to children of the working poor is serving just 20 percent of those eligible to participate, the report's

child-care assistance.

**STRENGTHENING** the state's child-care assistance program for the children of the working poor.

**ENCOURAGING** more private-sector investment in child care.

data shows.

Child-care costs take other tolls as well. The average income for an Oregon family with children is \$46,350 per year, the report states. But about 65 per-

cent of Oregon families who make less than that spend more than 10 percent of their income on child care, according to the report.

Child-care advocates face a tough road. Polls indicate that voters in February are likely to overturn a \$800 million temporary tax increase backed by legislators. The money raised by the temporary increase was intended to make up for Oregon's sliding revenue during the state's re-

cent economic downturn.

If the tax increase is voted down, social services, public safety and education are likely to absorb significant cuts.

The study did contain some bright news for Oregon: Teen pregnancy rates dropped 13 percent from the previous year, with 27.6 percent of girls ages 15 to 17 giving birth.

But it also states that more than 80,000 children in Oregon have no health insurance.