

EDITORIAL

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**Fiscal funk is
impacting kids**

Some of the information released this week in a report on the "State of Oregon's Children" probably comes as no surprise to working parents.

According to the report, compiled and released by the nonprofit Children First for Oregon, it's tough for many Oregonians to access child care and paying for it is an even bigger challenge.

One disturbing finding is that Oregon businesses are not taking advantage of a state program that could ease the child-care burden for workers with kids. According to the report, only 16 businesses in the state opted for the tax break for employers that provide day-care assistance to employees.

Just how hard it is for parents to pay for child care is demonstrated by this statistic: The 65 percent of Oregon families who earn less than the state's \$46,350 average income spend more than 10 percent of their annual income on child care.

That dismal statistic should be offset by the state's child care assistance program for children of the working poor, a program designed to provide financial support for hard-working parents. However, social services have been severely pared back during the state's budget shortfall, so less funding is available.

Finding quality child care isn't the only challenge for parents, either. According to the study, more than 80,000 of the state's children have no health insurance. Because of cutbacks, fewer families are getting financial aid from programs to cover children in low-income families.

And with more budget cuts looming pending the outcome of the February tax-increase election, the bleak picture for Oregon's children probably won't brighten anytime soon.