

Governor urges action on Healthy Kids Plan

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In testimony before the Joint Health Care Committee, Governor Ted Kulongoski appealed to legislators to extend medical coverage to the over 117,000 uninsured children in Oregon by enacting his Healthy Kids Plan, which would make affordable health care within reach for every child in the state.

"It is a tragedy to have children live without access to health care when there is little we can do about it. But it is worse when we can do something about it and we choose not to do so," the Governor told chairs Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson and Rep. Mitch Greenlick and the rest of the Committee. "This is the moment at which we have that choice."

For the last year Governor Kulongoski has traveled the state championing the plan, which would expand affordable health insurance, dental insurance and mental health care options for children through the Oregon Health Plan (OHP). School-Based Health Clinics, and public assistance on a sliding scale to help middle-income families purchase private insurance. It would be financed by bringing Oregon's tobacco taxes into parity with those in Washington State, helping also secure a substantial increase in federal matching funds.

In his testimony, the Governor emphasized that the proposal is "sensible, responsible and practical." *Sensible*, in that it leverages federal matching dollars Oregon is currently leaving on the table and would help enroll tens of thousands of children already eligible under the OHP. *Responsible* in that it offers a shared responsibility model to assist working families that earn too much to qualify for the OHP, but cannot afford private insurance on their own. And *practical* in building on our existing School Based Health Clinic system and serving as a meaningful step towards broader health care reform.

"We can do this for our children and make real progress on the road to health care for all," said Governor Kulongoski. "But if we fail with a proposal that is as sensible, responsible and practical as this one, I fear that we will end up no better off than we are now – with a growing number of children and adults of our working families who are denied the health care that they need to grow and thrive and be productive members of our society."

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