



# Children First for Oregon

TO: House Health Care Committee  
FROM: Stacy Michaelson, Children First for Oregon  
DATE: February 6, 2012  
RE: HB 4128

Co-Chairs Thompson and Greenlick, Members of the Committee:

For the record, I am Stacy Michaelson, Policy Associate at Children First for Oregon. Children First has long been an advocate of children's health care, and we see access to dental treatment for cleft palates as an important step forward for kids.

Oralfacial clefts are the most common of the craniofacial conditions, otherwise known as birth defects, in the United States. In Oregon alone, there were 68 cases in 2007. Cleft palates negatively affect a child's growth, skeletal development and teeth, as well as their breathing, speech, hearing, learning and language ability, and cognitive and psychomotor skills.

Proper and timely treatment can successfully address the condition, but treatment is intensive and often requires coordination of multiple services. For example, surgeries performed without the necessary dental care before and after see higher failure rates, with the procedures frequently needing to be repeated. Conversely, when the surgeon and orthodontist are able to coordinate, several procedures may be completed during the same anesthesia. But not all insurance providers cover the spectrum of services needed to successfully treat clefts, and for a family whose carrier does not cover all the treatment, the costs of care are often prohibitive and can force a family to delay the treatment needed for a child.

Delaying treatment impairs a child's ability to overcome the developmental setbacks caused by oralfacial clefts. No child should face a life of difficulty simply because their family cannot access the dental care they need. HB 4128 guarantees that children born with cleft palates will have the best start in life possible, and Children First urges your yes vote on this bill.

Thank you.