



April 13, 2015

Representative Mitch Greenlick
Members of the House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Greenlick and Representatives,

Children First strives to make Oregon the best place to be a kid. We advocate for policies and programs that keep children healthy and safe while providing opportunities to allow each to succeed.

In the last five years, Oregon has made significant improvements in the number of children without health insurance. Due to investments in Oregon's Healthy Kids program, matched by the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the percent of children without health insurance in Oregon has been halved since 2009. This success set Oregon apart nationally - until recently.

Oregon has stalled in reducing the number of children without access to health insurance. Since 2011, Oregon has made no additional gains in covering children and the rest of the nation has now surpassed us in reducing the number of children without health insurance. Oregon needs an expanded approach to restart progress in covering Oregon's children.

HB 3517 will address the needs of children who are currently the hardest to reach with health insurance, in large part due to eligibility criteria. Nearly one in six uninsured children in Oregon are currently ineligible for health coverage, leaving families and our communities vulnerable to higher health costs and devastating health outcomes.

The Oregon Health Authority needs every tool at its disposal to address the health needs and potential community health emergencies. HB 3517 gives this tool to the Oregon Health Authority without obligating additional resources.

Thank you for your attention and your work for the health of Oregon's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tonia Hunt", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Tonia Hunt
Executive Director