



June 13, 2017

Senator Hass and Representative Barnhart, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Tax Reform
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chairs Hass and Barnhart and legislators,

Children First for Oregon is the primary source for data on the wellbeing of Oregon's 860,000 kids. Our program, United for Kids, works with more than 100 advocate partner organizations to make Oregon the best place to be a kid.

We are Oregon's organization that works with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to release the annual KIDS COUNT data book. Coincidentally, today marks the release of the [2017 edition](#).

The data demonstrates Oregon's strengths – and its weaknesses in children's outcomes. Oregon ranks in the top half in Health and Family & Community. The Health indicator is a combination of children's birth weight, health insurance rate, child death rate, and drug abuse rate. The relative success of this data point demonstrates the positive result of intensive, innovative work Oregon has been known for in health care policy. We of course expect to do better. By investing in our health care system while ensuring all children have access to health care, we know the next generation can grow to be healthy and successful.

Economic Wellbeing and Education are two indicators that didn't fare as well. Despite a better than average economy, Oregon has 171,000 children in poverty and 295,000 who live in a rent-burdened household, leaving Oregon ranked 30th in the nation. Our ranking in Education is even worse. One-third of 4th graders and one-third of 8th graders are not proficient in their respective reading and math grade level. Given 25,000 low-income children are not enrolled in quality preschool and school-age children endure some of the largest class sizes and shortest school years in the nation, we shouldn't be surprised at these poor outcomes.

Children First for Oregon, with more than 60 of our partners, has also submitted a letter, stating that current service levels are inadequate to meet the needs of Oregon's children. When child-welfare is understaffed and under-supported. Or when only 18 percent of eligible families can use Employment Related Child Care. The list of needs for the next generation of Oregonians goes on. You have the ability to create an adequate and stable funding source. We urge you to do so.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregon's kids.

Sincerely,

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

Tonia Hunt
Executive Director