



February 17, 2017

Dear Chair Greenlick, Co-Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Primary Care Association (OPCA), I respectfully request your support for Cover All Kids, HB 2726. OPCA is a non-profit organization, with a mission to support Oregon's 33 community health centers, also known as federally qualified health centers, in leading the transformation of primary care to achieve health equity for all. Community health centers deliver integrated primary care, including dental and behavioral health services, to over 400,000 Oregonians annually – nearly **one third of these being children**. Community health centers are providers within the CCO networks, with one in four Oregon Health Plan members receiving primary care at a community health center.

Community health centers provide primary care to thousands of the children that Cover All Kids would help, and will continue to do so. This is a core part of the mission of community health centers – accepting all patients regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. On average, **over 14% children seen at an Oregon community health center are uninsured**.

Health centers provide essential primary care services, but are only one part of the overall health system that children need to access. And we know that without coverage, many patients unfortunately delay accessing primary care. For these reasons and more, we strongly believe all Oregon children should have full health coverage.

Coverage would allow these children to access specialty care and inpatient services without fear of unaffordable costs. It would also improve access to care in communities where there might not be a community health center, and provide families with more choices for providers, since not all providers work at a health center. **Over 20% of children seen at community health centers live in rural Oregon**; by covering all children, health centers will be able to redeploy limited federal resources to reach deeper into rural and underserved communities to deliver more care for the remaining uninsured and underinsured in our state.

Every child deserves a healthy start in life. Health insurance coverage is one of the single most effective ways to ensure that children receive the preventative health and medical care they need to thrive in school and life. HB 2726 extends the Oregon Health Plan to all children residing in Oregon up to 300 percent of the federal poverty line. This extension will ensure that all children have access to the health care services they need to be successful in school and in their lives.

Additionally, HB 2726 guarantees culturally competent outreach to newly eligible children and their families. **Nearly 50% of children seen at community health centers in Oregon are a racial/ethnic minority.**

Oregon needs to take the next step and extend healthcare coverage to all children. OPCA recognizes that having insurance not only promotes health and increases access to health-generating services, but decreases health-related disparities. We hope that you will join us in support of Cover All Kids.

Thank you,

Laura Etherton
Federal and State Policy Director