

**Statement of Janet Bauer, Policy Analyst, in Support of SB 558**  
**Senate Health Care Committee**  
**February 21, 2017**

The Oregon Center for Public Policy (OCPP) supports Senate Bill 558, a bill to ensure that all children in Oregon have health insurance and the opportunities that health security can bring.

Unfortunately, not all children in Oregon have health insurance. According to the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 31,000 Oregon children lacked health insurance in 2015. To put that number in perspective, that is more children than attended the school districts of Eugene, Corvallis, and Grants Pass combined.

SB 558 would extend the Health Care for All Oregon Children program to all children residing in the state with incomes below 300 percent of the federal poverty level. It would also direct the Oregon Health Authority to conduct an outreach and enrollment effort targeted to children lacking coverage.

Children with health insurance are healthier than those without it. Research also shows that health insurance during childhood has positive economic impacts on children, their families and the broader economy. Those benefits come in the form of higher educational attainment and higher earnings as working adults.

A Rand study in 2005 found that better health status in childhood was associated with higher incomes, higher wealth, more weeks worked and a higher growth rate in income.

Studies have also found that public health insurance coverage is linked to a lower likelihood of bankruptcy and to less medical debt. Clearly, health insurance coverage for children contributes to the economic stability of the families they live in.

There is also evidence that health insurance coverage for children benefits the broader economy. Researchers have found that providing health insurance to low-income children and pregnant women increased their spending on other consumer goods by the equivalent of \$800 per family per year in 2009 dollars.

Clearly, Oregon would win by ensuring that all Oregon children have health insurance. Children and their families would win. Our economy would win as well.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and support of SB 558.