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**New national report on child well being puts Oregon in top  
10 for health, bottom 10 for economic stability**

*The 25th annual KIDS COUNT report shows Oregon slow to make economic  
progress for families following recession*

**Portland, OR** - The latest KIDS COUNT report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation on the well-being of children state-by-state reveals that when Oregon commits to pro-child policies, it can lead the nation in improving outcomes for Oregonians and strengthening the state. Nowhere is this more evident than in children's health, where Oregon leapt from number 17 to number 7 in the report's national rankings in just one year.

A main driver behind the steady climb, year over year, in Oregon's child health ranking is the state's continued success in enrolling children in health care coverage. According to the report, the percentage of children without health insurance decreased by more than half (from 13 percent to 6 percent) between 2008 and 2012. This decline was brought about by the 2009 passage of the Oregon Healthy Kids program, which extended low- and no-cost coverage to more children through expanded eligibility and sustained outreach efforts across the state. The success of Healthy Kids continues to be enhanced with the roll-out of the Affordable Care Act.

Oregon's overall ranking, however, continues to linger in the bottom half of states at number 30, owing to a failure to make notable economic gains for families. Ranked at number 40 for family economic stability, Oregon again found itself in the bottom 10 along with Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. According to the report, the state's high child poverty rate remained unchanged from the previous year (23 percent) and hovers well above its pre-recession level (17 percent in 2007). Other indicators of economic stability for families show slight improvements over the previous year, but still continue to trail their pre-recession levels. More than one-third (34 percent) of Oregon children live in homes where parents lack secure employment (up from 29 percent in 2008) and nearly 41 percent of households with children struggle to afford housing (up from 38 percent in 2005).

"This report shows us what is possible when the state puts a concerted effort into turning the tide for children," says Tonia Hunt, executive director of Children First for Oregon. "It also shows us what happens when we don't go far enough. Despite the recession, we were able to provide tens of thousands of children access to health care because we marshaled the collective will to get it done." Hunt added, "Today we are seeing the rewards of investing in children's health. But we are also seeing the results of not addressing child poverty with the urgency it demands. Until we improve the economic stability of Oregon families, Oregon will remain in the bottom half of these national rankings."

According to Children First, the data paint a clear picture of diminished opportunities in Oregon over the last two decades in the face of steadily rising costs for young families. When adjusted for inflation, the cost of child care alone has increased by nearly one-third since 1994, while median family income has declined. Meanwhile, the state's child poverty rate increased from 15 percent to 23 percent during the same period, reflecting the increasing difficulty families are having in making ends meet.

"When we talk about child poverty in Oregon, we must remember that these are not someone else's children in some other community," says Hunt. "One out of every four children in our state will be challenged to join the work force, drive innovation, or afford the goods and services we produce and sell in Oregon."

The middle class is the engine of our economy and if we want a thriving state, we must fully and immediately commit to breaking the cycle of poverty for the next generation.” Hunt concludes, “The good news is that our success in health shows us that the solutions to big problems are not beyond our reach.”

*Children First is a nonprofit, nonpartisan child advocacy organization, committed to improving the lives of Oregon’s vulnerable children and their families. Our mission is to make long-term, systemic change by advocating for policies and priorities that keep children healthy and safe, and strengthen families. [www.cffo.org](http://www.cffo.org)*

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.*

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