

## House committee approves healthy kids plan

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Oregon families are one step closer to relief from high cost of health care

Salem, Oregon—The House Health Care Committee today passed the Healthy Kids plan, which will help working families afford health insurance for their kids. The bill, HB 2201, was approved by a 5-4 party line vote, and will proceed to the House Revenue Committee for another round of hearings.

“This is a huge step forward for Oregon’s working families,” said House Speaker Jeff Merkley (D-Portland). “It is well past time for us to make sure all kids in Oregon get the health care they need. Today, we are one step closer to that goal.”

Oregon families whose employers don’t provide health insurance pay an average of nearly \$11,000 a year for private insurance. All but the most affluent families are priced out of the market, yet they are the ones who need help the most. And with premiums rising by more than 10% every year, cost has become an insurmountable obstacle to health security.

“We can’t leave the health of Oregon’s kids to chance, and we can’t force their parents to choose between putting food on the table and buying health insurance,” said Rep. Tina Kotek (D-Portland). “We have a moral obligation to make sure that Oregon families will be able to afford health coverage without having to make those impossible choices.”

The Healthy Kids bill sets up a sliding payment scale for families based on their income. All Oregon families will have access to the low group-insurance rate for their kids, but families who make less than 350% of the federal poverty level will pay premiums based on their income.

“When kids go uninsured, their only access to health care becomes the hospital emergency room. That is not only costly for them and their health, but it is costly for Oregon taxpayers,” said Rep. Sara Gelser (D-Corvallis). “We have to address the fundamental crisis our families face in getting preventive care, and opening up access to low-cost health insurance is the key to doing that.”

“Mitch Greenlick and Tina Kotek should be proud of their efforts to develop a plan with broad support from health advocates, religious groups and business partners,” Merkley said. “This is a real win for Oregon’s kids.”

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