



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

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June 26, 2007

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senator
230 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington DC 20510-3703



Dear Senator Wyden:

I am writing to request your support for legislation that would significantly improve access to critical information about the condition of children in our state of Oregon and across the country. Obtaining this information would allow us to more effectively address policy shortcomings and improve quality of life for children in our nation.

The State Child Well-Being Research Act of 2007 would expand the National Survey of Child Health. It has been introduced in the House as H.R. 2477 by Representative Fattah and in the Senate as S. 1482 by Senators Rockefeller and Snowe. I am hopeful that you can lend your voice to this important issue.

As you know, over the past decade the federal government has given the states far greater power to administer programs for children and families. In order to make informed decisions about where our limited resources should be invested, we need accurate, timely and reliable data about Oregon's children and how effective our current programs are in providing them with the assistance they need.

Child Trends recently completed a study of the available state level data on child well-being. Their analysis shows that national surveys do not have adequate sample sizes to provide statistically significant data on small or medium-sized states such as Oregon. While some state level surveys do exist, the data they provide us has large gaps. Furthermore, data from programs such as Medicaid, SCHIP, TANF or child care provides information only on children in those programs, not on all children.

The State Child Well-Being Research Act would expand the National Survey of Child Health and allow the collection and dissemination of important data in each and every state, rather than just the dozen or so feasible in the current program. Data would be collected on a rolling basis, so that key data would be available every year and subgroup data every two years. Data would be available to local, state, and federal policymakers four to six months after collection. In Oregon this data would be based on the experiences of about 2,000 families. Experienced researchers estimate that this study would cost \$20 million a year.

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Furthermore, if Congress adopts this state-level data approach, it will be made even more effective due to a public/private partnership that has been proposed. The Annie E. Casey Foundation and other foundations have offered to invest at least \$1 million a year in order to train and provide technical assistance to state officials and policy analysts, thus ensuring that the data will be understandable, accessible and will become an excellent tool to increase child well-being.

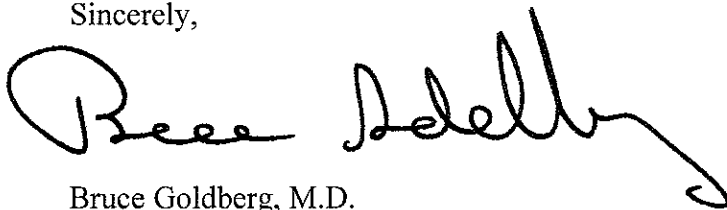
Representative Fattah's bill would help hard-pressed state policymakers and administrations across the nation. A state-level cross-sectional survey would ensure samples sizes of about 2,000 households with children in each and every state, providing states with an invaluable resource to everyone concerned about the well-being of children and families.

The growing federal debt and nationwide state funding shortfalls make it essential that policymakers have access to timely, high-quality data to help ensure that every dollar spent goes to effective programs that provide real support to our most vulnerable populations.

Annie E. Casey Foundation has set up a website – www.childindicators.com – that explains the legislation and supports our efforts to have the State Child Well-Being Research Act of 2007 become law.

I very much appreciate the commitment you have shown in the past to ensuring a bright future for Oregon's children and am hopeful you will support the State Child Well-Being Research Act of 2007. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Goldberg", with a long, sweeping tail extending to the right.

Bruce Goldberg, M.D.
Director

BG:tlemman

Copy: Erinn Kelley-Siel, Governor's Human Services Policy Advisor
Sarah Bittleman, Governor's Director of Federal Policy
Mickey Lansing, Executive Director, Oregon Commission on Children & Families
Ramona Foley, Assistant Director, Children, Adults & Families Division, DHS