



CHILDREN NOW



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California Budget Deal Endangers Children's Health Care

SACRAMENTO, CA – A coalition of leading children's health advocates expressed outrage with the state budget deal announced today that jeopardizes access to health care for California children. The budget deal would eliminate the Healthy Families Program and shift nearly 900,000 children to Medi-Cal.

"The Governor and legislative leaders have struck a short-sighted deal that unnecessarily puts the health of California children at risk," said Wendy Lazarus, Founder and Co-President of The Children's Partnership. "While we understand that hard budget choices had to be made, those choices should not fall on the backs of our children and their ability to get the care they need to stay healthy and succeed in life."

"The Governor and Legislature are experimenting with the health of 900,000 children," added Peter Manzo, President & CEO of United Ways of California. "Shifting all of those children out of a popular, successful program, with no guarantee that they'll actually have access to providers, is an unprecedented and reckless move."

The budget deal to eliminate the Healthy Families Program comes in spite of a chorus of opposition from a broad coalition of pediatricians and other health care providers, advocates, and community and faith groups. A coalition of more than forty organizations had endorsed an [alternative proposal](#) that would have better served children by transitioning a smaller group of children and including protections to improve children's access to care. The non-partisan Legislative Analyst's Office and the highly-respected research organization, the Urban Institute, also expressed grave concerns about the elimination of Healthy Families.

"This extremely disappointing decision to transition all Healthy Families children to the Medi-Cal program will severely impact access to health care for the 4.5 million children who rely on these programs, and it could ultimately keep children from receiving the preventive care and health services they need," added Ted Lempert, President of Children Now.

“The budget deal underscores how essential it is that the state significantly improve access to health care services in Medi-Cal so that the program is able to serve both the children currently in Medi-Cal, and those children who will be transitioning from Healthy Families,” said Jamila Iris Edwards, Northern California Director of Children’s Defense Fund-California. “We need to ensure that children are able to receive the health services they need in a timely way. If even one child loses access to the medical care they need, we have all lost.”

“It is clearer than ever that California needs to get its priorities straight, and move forward with revenue solutions that enable us to invest in our children and the future of the state,” said Corey Timpson, Executive Director of PICO California. “We cannot afford to keep making these devastating budget decisions that disinvest in services and opportunities for low-income children.”

Advocates emphasized the need for substantive safeguards, strong oversight, and detailed monitoring of access to care to guarantee the best possible outcomes for children’s health.

“If the Legislature approves this devastating plan, we must work hard to reduce the damage and ensure that no California children are worse off,” said Suzie Shupe, Executive Director of California Coverage & Health Initiatives.

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The 100% Campaign, a collaborative effort of The Children’s Partnership, Children Now and Children’s Defense Fund-California since 1998 was created to ensure that all of California’s children obtain the health insurance they need to grow up strong and healthy. www.100percentcampaign.org

The Children’s Partnership (TCP) is a national, nonprofit child advocacy organization working to ensure that all children - especially those at risk of being left behind - have the resources and the opportunities they need to grow up healthy and to lead productive lives. TCP focuses particular attention on securing health coverage for uninsured children and ensuring that the opportunities of digital technology benefit all children and families.

Children Now is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization working to raise children’s well-being to the top of the state and national policy agenda. Children Now focuses on ensuring quality health care, a solid education and a positive media environment for all children.

Children’s Defense Fund-California is the California office of the Children’s Defense Fund, a non-profit child advocacy organization that has worked relentlessly for 35 years to ensure a level playing field for all children. The Children’s Defense Fund champions policies and programs that lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect, and ensure their access to health care, a quality education, and a moral and spiritual foundation.

PICO California is the largest grassroots congregation-based community organizing network in California. Nineteen local California PICO federations organize in 73 cities and 35 school districts, reaching from Placer to San Diego County. Together, PICO federations represent 450,000 families of diverse economic, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds across the state. PICO California is part of the PICO National Network, which includes organizations in 16 states. www.picocalifornia.org

California Coverage & Health Initiatives (CCHI) is an association of local Children's Health Initiatives (CHIs) in 24 California counties, 17 Outreach & Enrollment partners and contacts in 54 of 58 California counties covering the geographic area where 95% of the state's population resides. Members of CCHI have insured more than 167,000 previously uninsured children in locally-funded Healthy Kids programs. CCHI members and partners have an extensive network of Certified Application Assistants, Promotoras, and health outreach workers. With firsthand experience and success enrolling children into public programs, such as Medi-Cal and Healthy Families, as well as administering local Healthy Kids programs, the members of CCHI have shown that coverage for all children in California is a reachable goal. www.cchi4families.org

United Ways of California (UWCA) is the state association for California's local United Ways. UWCA works to improve the health, education and financial stability for low-income children and families by enhancing and coordinating the advocacy and community impact work of California's United Ways. UWCA is a strong advocate of expanding health coverage to all California children and their families. United Ways work closely with local community and business leaders, state and federal legislators, and volunteers to promote these is achievable and important goal. www.unitedwaysca.org

<p>Children Now <i>Ted Lempert, President – Contact Ronald Pineda at 510-763-2444 x119 to speak to Ted, or contact Ted directly at 510-763-2444 x155 or 650-245-8166</i> <i>Mike Odeh, Health Policy Associate – 510-763-2444 x122</i></p>	<p>The Children's Partnership <i>Wendy Lazarus, Founder and Co-President – Contact Carrie Spencer at 310-260-1220 to speak to Wendy, or contact Wendy directly at 310-710-9830</i></p>
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