



Maximizing Medicaid for a Stronger & Healthier Ohio

Access to affordable health insurance has had a powerful influence on the health of Ohio's children. Research shows that because of Medicaid coverage, children have less severe illnesses, fewer hospitalizations, fewer emergency department visits, and more preventive care than they would have had they not been insured.¹ Medicaid coverage for kids and pregnant women is tied to greater overall economic security, including higher college enrollment rates and wages.²

Challenge

Children in Ohio aren't getting the care they need. Ohio can and should be doing a better job of providing care to families and children — particularly those who are covered by and/or eligible for Medicaid.

- **4.9% of Ohio's children do not have health insurance.**³ Similarly, children under 138% of the Federal Poverty Rate (FPL) have an uninsured rate of 6.5% - meaning that expanded access to Medicaid could make a big impact.
- More than **1.3 million children** (ages 0-21) in our state are served by Medicaid⁴ - or **54.5% of Children** in the state according to CDF-Ohio's Kids Count Data Profiles.⁵
- **Ohio is 29th in the Nation in Uninsured Children** – meaning that many Ohio kids aren't getting what they need to live healthy lives.⁶

¹ Hakim, R. B., Boben, P. J., & Bonney, J. B. (2000). Medicaid and the Health of Children. *Health care financing review*, 22(1), 133–140. Can be found at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4194697/#:~:text=Medicaid%20has%20had%20a%20powerful,had%20they%20not%20been%20insured.>

² Jeopardizing a Sound Investment: Why Short-Term Cuts to Medicaid Coverage During Pregnancy and Childhood Could Result in Long-Term Harm – [the Common Wealth Fund](https://www.commonwealthfund.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Park_Medicaid_short_term_cuts_long-term-effects_ib_v2.pdf). Can be found here: https://www.commonwealthfund.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Park_Medicaid_short_term_cuts_long-term-effects_ib_v2.pdf

³ CDF Ohio Kids Count Data Profiles (2024). Can be found here: <https://www.childrensdefense.org/cdf-in-the-states/ohio/cdf-oh-kids-count/cdf-oh-kids-count-data-profiles/>

⁴ The Ohio Department of Medicaid, Testimony to Finance Committee (Feb 5th, 2025): https://ohiohouse.gov/committees/finance/meetings/cmte_h_finance_1_2025-02-05-1030_16

⁵ KFF.org. State Indicators, Children 0-18 Health insurance access. Can be found: <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/children-0-18/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

⁶ Georgetown: Kids Health Care Report Card (2023). Can be found here: <https://kidshealthcarereport.ccf.georgetown.edu/states/ohio/>

- In Ohio, **29.5% of Children** in small towns and rural areas are covered by Medicaid or CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program).⁷

Supporting Child Well-Being: Budget Recommendations

Medicaid is a lifesaving program for thousands of Ohio kids. However, Ohio kids have had their access to Medicaid threatened by Federal action. During the Medicaid Unwinding, Ohio was one of nine states with the highest rate of children removed from Medicaid coverage.⁸ To counteract this potential harm, the state must put forward a child-centered budget.

The state must implement a waiver for continuous coverage of kids 0-3 and consider an expansion up to age 6.

Allowing children with Medicaid to maintain their coverage regardless of household income fluctuations will give children consistent access to the well-child visits, vaccinations, and specialty care they need to start school ready to learn, while helping low-income parents stay focused on getting their kids to the doctor without worrying about whether visits will be covered from one month to the next.

Strengthen Medicaid/CHIP to allow coverage for children in families up to 300% FPL

Expansion up to 300% FPL (or \$79,950.00 for a family of 3) can ensure that all children in Ohio have access to affordable, quality health care during all stages of development, which is essential to their future health and success. Children in families where one or more parents work a low-wage hourly job would benefit significantly – in 2023, only 23.9% of workers under 200% FPL were able to access employer sponsored health insurance.⁹

Increase utilization of Ohio's Evidence-based Home Visiting Programs (Help Me Grow)

Home visiting programs are one proven approach to mitigating infant mortality. For every \$1 invested in home visiting programs, the state return on investment is up to \$6.¹⁰ Ohio increased its investment to \$80 million over the biennium in evidence-based home visiting programs in the FY 22-23 budget. Ohio should continue to fully fund the Help Me Grow program at current levels.

⁷ Georgetown (2025) Medicaid's Role in Small Towns and Rural Areas. Can be found at:

<https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2025/01/15/medicaids-role-in-small-towns-and-rural-areas/#heading-7>

⁸ Secretary Becerras Letter to Ohio Governor (2024). Can be found at: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/sec-becerras-letter-to-oh-governor.pdf>

⁹ KFF.org. Employer sponsored Health Insurance: Policy 101. Can be found: <https://www.kff.org/health-policy-101-employer-sponsored-health-insurance/?entry=table-of-contents-who-is-covered-by-employer-sponsored-health-insurance>

¹⁰As described in *Investing in Ohio's Children and Families*, Ohio Budget Fact Sheet:

https://archives.obm.ohio.gov/Files/Budget_and_Planning/Operating_Budget/Fiscal_Years_2020-2021/Enacted/Investing_in_Children_and_Families.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Fully Fund House Bill 7 (Up to \$34 million over FY26-27)¹¹

House Bill 7, as passed in the 135th General Assembly, is a big step forward for healthier Ohio kids. Fully funding this new statute provides additional funding for the Department of Children and Youth (DCY), the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), and the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) to cover the costs of new program requirements and interagency agreements such as:

- Comprehensive screening
- Coordination of home visiting services
- Increasing access to WIC and more.
- Supporting the Healthy Beginnings at Home program

Standing Firm Against Federal Cuts

Federal lawmakers are considering cuts to key policies that keep Ohio children and families healthy. Federal Medicaid cuts could have severely impact children —22% of Federal Medicaid funds in 2023 were spent on children.¹² In 2023, more than half of all federal spending on children (57%) went toward programs like Medicaid, CHIP, and SNAP —which are all currently facing Federal cuts.¹³ Ohio lawmakers must send a clear message that these actions by Congress would hurt Ohioans.

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¹¹ This cost estimate is from the original Fiscal Analysis of the Bill as Introduced. Because of this, the number is a high estimate compared to the final version of the bill as passed by the legislature.

¹² The Urban Institute: How would children fare under the proposed cuts? (2025): <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/how-would-children-fare-under-proposed-cuts-federal-spending>

¹³ The Urban Institute (2024). Kids Share of Federal Spending: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/kids-share-2024>