



## **CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE**

*A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families*

### **For Immediate Release**

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## **Governor proposes important investments in kids**

*Health coverage, early learning top list of significant investments*

**December 19, 2006 (Seattle)** – Governor Chris Gregoire's budget, released today, makes important and sizeable investments in the children of Washington State.

"In this budget, the Governor has shown a true commitment to children," said Jon Gould, Deputy Director of the Children's Alliance. "These investments would make Washington a better place for children to learn, grow and thrive."

The Children's Alliance is particularly pleased with Governor Chris Gregoire's investment in the health of children. Her budget's investments take the state far toward the goal of covering all children by 2010.

"Covering all kids in Washington is within reach, and Governor Gregoire's proposed budget gets us within inches of our goal," Gould said.

The Governor's budget includes just over \$30 million in state funds to expand health coverage options for families, to expand outreach to uninsured children who are eligible for an existing program and to simplify the process of signing up for publicly supported health coverage.

"Covering all children pays off," Gould added. "We'll save money on unneeded emergency room costs, and Washington's children will be healthier and more successful in school."

The Children's Alliance is also pleased to see the Governor's investments in early learning, which are a good start on the substantial task of ensuring that children across the state have ample opportunities to learn and develop in the early years.

"High-quality early learning experiences can make the difference between being ready for school and struggling from the very first day," Gould said. "With these investments, the Governor is moving towards a system that gives every child the opportunity to succeed."

The Governor's budget does not include the \$10 million needed to make school lunch free for all children in low-income families, a priority of the Children's Alliance this year. Last year, the legislature eliminated the "co-pay" some low-income children paid for school breakfast, resulting in an average 40 percent increase in school breakfast participation around the state, based on a sampling of school districts.

The Children's Alliance looks forward to working with legislators to ensure that eliminating the co-pay for lunch is included in the final state budget.

"The governor clearly recognizes that children need to be healthy to learn to their full potential," said Linda Stone, Eastern Washington director of the Children's Alliance. "We know from research that they need to be well-nourished as well. Providing free lunch to families that might not otherwise be able to afford it is an important tool in fighting hunger and making sure children enter the classroom ready to learn."

To see the Children's Alliance's legislative agenda for 2007, please go to

[http://www.childrensalliance.org/4Download/advocacy/2007/2007\\_legislative\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.childrensalliance.org/4Download/advocacy/2007/2007_legislative_agenda.pdf)

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*For more than twenty years, the Children's Alliance has advocated for children, youth and families in Washington. The Alliance has 128 organizational members, and more than 7,000 individual members statewide. For a [list of member organizations](#) and to learn more about the Children's Alliance, go to: [www.childrensalliance.org](http://www.childrensalliance.org)*