



## CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

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

### **For Immediate Release**

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## **Kids helped, but not held harmless, in House budget proposal** *Raising new revenue must be the next step*

**March 31, 2009**—Like the Senate budget proposal released yesterday, the House budget proposal includes some good investments in children and families, but in the current economic environment kids aren't fully protected.

“We appreciate that the House, like the Senate, protected some important investments in children, including funding for children's health coverage, home visiting programs, school meals and reducing disproportionality in the foster care system. Yet we know demand is going up as the economy worsens and both chambers of the legislature also cut programs that we know children and families will need to help them get through these tough times,” said Paola Maranan, Executive Director of the Children's Alliance.

The Children's Alliance appreciates that the House budget proposal preserves investments in Apple Health for Kids, taking advantage of the substantial infusion of federal funding from reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program. At the same time, we are concerned about cuts to reimbursement rates to healthcare providers. The House and Senate budgets propose similar cuts, which could make it harder for kids to get in to see a doctor.

“Coverage is important, but it doesn't necessarily open the doctor's door to children,” Maranan said. “We need to make sure doctors will see children on Apple Health for Kids, and the proposed cuts to reimbursement rates will make it harder—not easier—for parents to find a doctor for their kids.”

We commend the House for ensuring that kids in low-income families can get school meals by continuing to waive the co-pay many low-income children used to pay for school breakfast and for lunch in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Like the Senate, the House budget proposal also continues modest support for summer meal programs that feed hungry kids when school is out.

The House budget proposal maintains state support for home visiting programs that are proven to reduce child abuse rates and help vulnerable families nurture their children through tough times. In a slightly different approach, the House proposed cutting funding for the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP), the state program for low-income kids that is similar to Head Start, by imposing a 2.5 percent cut in the rates providers are given to serve children. Providers would be expected to serve the same number of children for less money.

Finally, adolescents leaving foster care will be harmed by this budget, which sunsets medical care, housing and other services for teens transitioning out of care.

All of these budget cuts must be understood within the context of the severe recession facing families. Over the next year, an estimated 40,000 more kids will drop into poverty, driving up the need for programs that will help children and families survive these difficult economic times.

“These proposed budgets are the same in one fundamental way: neither proposal includes the new revenues we need to get us through this recession and lay the foundation for our economic recovery,” Maranan said. “Again, we call on lawmakers to meet this challenge by looking at all solutions, including closing tax loopholes of little public value and creating a tax on high incomes. We need bold action to solve this crisis without eroding the public systems and structures we value here in Washington.”

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