

# Study: A fifth of rural Oregon kids live in poverty

Oregon is 24th among states

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — More than 20 percent of children in rural Oregon live in poverty, a new study finds.

A report from Save the Children places Oregon 24th among states in terms of how its rural children are faring economically.

About 21.6 percent of children in Oregon's rural areas live in poverty, while 16.1 percent of children in Oregon's urban areas were considered impoverished, according to the study.

Nationally, 14.1 million, or 19.5 percent, of American kids live in poverty, a rate that exceeds most other countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a 37-member group of nations with advanced economies.

Researchers used data from the 2016 American Community Survey, published by the U.S. Census Bureau, to determine rural and urban poverty



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U.S. Department of Agriculture

rates among kids.

The Census Bureau defines the poverty threshold in 2016 as an annual income of \$24,339 for a family of four with two children.

In most states, rural child poverty is higher than poverty among children in urban areas, consistent with a decadeslong

trend in the U.S., the Save the Children study found.

"Growing up in poverty is one of the greatest threats to healthy child development," the study states. "When young children grow up in poverty, they are at higher risk of experiencing difficulties later in life — having poor physical and

mental health, becoming teen parents, dropping out of school and facing limited unemployment opportunities."

Overall, Oregon ranks 22nd among states for the five indicators of child poverty that the study synthesizes.

Save the Children used five main data points corre-

sponding to events that "end" childhood: infant mortality, malnutrition, dropping out or delaying graduation from high school, violence and teen births.

Oregon has the nation's eighth-lowest infant mortality rate, and has relatively low rates of teen births and violence against children. But its low high school graduation rates and comparatively high rates of child malnutrition drive down the state's overall ranking.

With 25.2 percent of Oregon kids failing to graduate in four years, Oregon ranks 48th for high school graduation rates.

And the state ranked 39th in 2015 for child food insecurity, with about 22.5 percent of Oregon kids facing malnutrition.

But that's a slight improvement, as the state's overall rate of food insecurity continues to decline, according to an October study from Oregon State University.

"The strength of the Oregon economic recovery appears to have finally had a positive effect on reducing food insecurity," wrote Mark Edwards, a professor of sociology at Ore-

gon State University's School of Public Policy, in an October report. "These positive trends being noted, Oregon continues to have a food insecurity rate that is statistically significantly higher than the rate for the U.S. as a whole, representing about 560,000 Oregon adults and children in food insecure households."

In commenting on the study's findings about the state's rural poverty rate, Gov. Kate Brown's office emphasized what they say are her efforts to tackle the root causes of poverty throughout the state.

"All of Oregon's children deserve the opportunity to grow and thrive in safe environments," a spokeswoman for Brown wrote in an email. "In addition to increasing access to comprehensive health care and hands-on learning opportunities, Gov. Brown is focused on addressing the root causes that devastate families and impact children, including substance abuse, addiction, housing instability, and domestic violence."

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

# Proposed US banking fix for marijuana may not open all doors

By **MICHAEL R. BLOOD**  
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A proposal in Congress to ease the U.S. ban on marijuana could encourage more banks to do business with cannabis companies, but it appears to fall short of a cure-all for an industry that must operate mainly as a cash business in a credit card world.

Marijuana is legal in some form in about 30 states, but companies that grow or sell it often are locked out at banks. Their money isn't wanted because the drug is illegal under federal law and transactions tied to pot proceeds could expose financial institutions to money-laundering charges.

The bipartisan measure — which received tentative support from President Donald Trump — would ensure states have the right to determine the best approach to marijuana, without federal interference. It also includes language intended to address the banking gap caused by the federal ban.

The legislation has been praised as a strong step, but "standing alone, it's likely not a silver bullet for the banking problem," said California pot industry attorney Nicole Howell Neubert, a member of a state task force that studied the banking stalemate.

"Most financial institutions will be looking for even more affirmative direction from (Washington) to feel comfortable with banking cannabis companies," she said in a statement.

The shortage of banking services has been a major obstacle to the industry, often forcing businesses to conduct sales and pay vendors and

taxes in cash, sometimes in vast amounts that can become targets for criminals.

The number of financial institutions working with marijuana companies has been growing, but it's still a small fraction overall.

The Mountain West Credit Union Association and the Maine Credit Union League said in a joint statement that the legislation would "provide the certainty we need ... to service this growing industry."

The measure, which faces an uncertain future in Congress, does not legalize marijuana nationally. But it takes steps to allow banks to handle marijuana funds without the risk of federal prosecution.

For example, it says money from marijuana businesses in states where the drug is legal would no longer be considered illegal proceeds, and it would allow banks to accept those funds without breaking money-laundering laws.

Even then, risk remains as banks face a range of compliance rules by accepting marijuana-linked money. The Bank Secrecy Act requires that

banks know their customers well enough to ensure they are not engaging in money laundering, said Julie A. Hill, a professor at the University of Alabama School of Law.

"This likely means that a bank accepting marijuana money would have to do enough research to know that their customers are complying with state law regarding the sale of marijuana," Hill said. "The bank would likely have to confirm that the marijuana is not sold to minors or sold for transport to states where it is illegal."

Banks could face penalties if they don't meet such requirements.

They also are urged to watch for warning signs of possible illegal activity, such as financial statements provided by a business not squaring with account activity.

Because the cost of doing such research would be high, some banks might choose to stay away from marijuana money, Hill said in an email.

If the legislation passes, it's likely marijuana will stay illegal in some conservative-leaning states, such as South Dakota and Kansas. Some banks in those states might then be uneasy about handling marijuana dollars coming from places where the drug is legal.

"I don't imagine the ...

financial institution would take that risk to take in funds from a business considered illegal in that state," said Beth Mills of the Western Bankers Association.

Another uncertainty that could give banks pause: The conflict between Trump, who signaled his support for the legislation, and his own Justice Department.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions staunchly opposes mar-

ijuana and lifted an Obama administration policy in order to allow federal prosecutors to more aggressively pursue cases in states that have legalized marijuana.

Colorado tried to set up a credit union in 2015 to serve the pot industry but the Federal Reserve blocked it. In Oregon, the state Department of Revenue built a fortress-like office for dropping off and counting cash.

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