

# Dismayed by Failure to Fund Kids' Healthcare

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by the failure of Congressional leadership to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program for the long-term," Congresswoman Bonamici said. "Republicans just added about \$1.5 trillion to the debt with their tax bill and they are now insisting that we cut prevention and public health programs to pay for children's health insurance. That's wrong."

A bipartisan bill that would extend CHIP passed unanimously by the Senate Finance Committee, but the Senate majority has not allowed it to see the floor. Instead, Congress included a three-month extension of the program in an appropriations bill passed last month.

"Federal leaders should unite, put aside political gamesmanship and fund the CHIP program." Gov. Brown said. "Unfortunately, majority leadership in Congress is focused on looking out for the wealthy and well-connected. Here in Oregon we're focused on the people, not the powerful."

A pediatrician at the rally, Ben Hoffman, told the Portland Observer he's seen the impact the uncertainty of the funding has had on families.

"People are scared. People don't know what they're going to do if they lose their healthcare," Hoffman said.

"For those of us who are in the trenches, we have to look these families in the eyes, these parents, and help them come to terms with what they might do if they lose access to health insurance. It's really a horrible thing...the message needs to get to DC that we can't hold these families hostage."

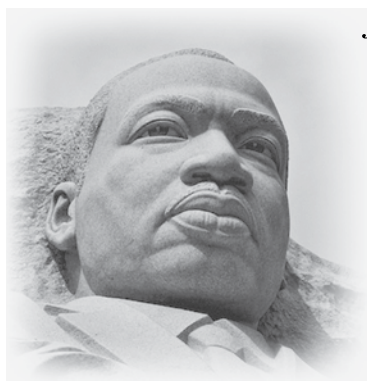
Sen. Merkley told the Portland Observer his thoughts were on the next steps needed to address the issue with other lawmakers.

"It needs to part of the comprehensive funding package. Right now, the government is running out of money on January 19th so we expect this package to be put together over the next few days...we need to have a lot of pressure applied," Merkley said. "It's absolutely outrageous that my Republican colleagues have been focusing on raiding the treasury for the rich while neglecting working Americans."

Prior to a three month temporary extension of the program, Gov. Brown had directed the Oregon Health Authority to extend coverage of CHIP in Oregon through April using leftover funds to cover it.

The CHIP program, called Oregon Healthy Kids in Oregon, covers kids and pregnant women from low to middle income families whose income is too high to receive Medicaid, but too low to purchase coverage themselves.

*Those who are not looking for happiness are the most likely to find it, because those who are searching forget that the surest way to be happy is to seek happiness for others.*



--Martin Luther King Jr.

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