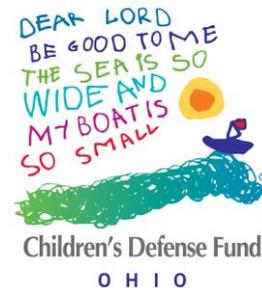


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Contact:

Sarah Biehl, Children's Defense Fund-Ohio
sbiehl@childrensdefense.org | 614.221.2244



Mixed Results for Ohio Children in the New State Budget

Ohio's new state budget for 2016-17 contains wins and losses for Ohio children. On the plus side, Children's Defense Fund-Ohio applauds legislators and the Governor's office for enacting policies that will improve the availability of quality child care for low-income children. On the other hand, the budget's policies will prevent families from obtaining health coverage, exacerbate Ohio's infant mortality crisis, and make it harder for counties to protect children from abuse and neglect. "This legislation does not serve all children from a holistic perspective," says Sarah Biehl, Policy Director at Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. "It creates positive programs in pieces, but the overall outlook for our state's poorest and most vulnerable youth is still grim."

The Good:

- **Early Childhood Education** – The allocation of \$40 million in new funds to serve an additional 6,125 children through Ohio's child care subsidy program is great news. In addition, the budget allocates \$40 million for Ohio's Step Up to Quality program, which recognizes that low-income children need not just a safe place to stay while their parents are at work, but enriching programming that develops skills. Governor Kasich and legislative leaders who championed these changes recognize the importance of quality care for low-income children, and this is a very promising step forward for low-income families.
- **Child Hunger** – \$19 million allocated to Ohio's foodbanks will put food on the plates of many hungry children in Ohio who need healthy food to learn and grow.
- **Infant Mortality** – The creation of new programs to target racial disparities in infant mortality rates by focusing resources in high-risk communities and at high-risk mothers are promising steps forward to combatting Ohio's infant mortality crisis.

The Bad:

- **Medicaid and Infant Mortality** – Although Children's Defense Fund-Ohio is happy that Medicaid coverage has been preserved for pregnant women (and all adults) between 138-200% of the federal poverty guidelines, family planning services for those women has been removed. This means that mothers will not have help planning to space out their pregnancies at a time when Ohio is receiving national and local attention for its dismal infant mortality rates. Spacing out pregnancies is key to reducing infant mortality.

- **Healthy Ohio** – Implementation of the “Healthy Ohio” program, which will require adult Medicaid beneficiaries to pay premiums, contribute to health savings accounts, and otherwise spend money they don’t have to maintain their health coverage, will put many women of child bearing age at risk of losing health coverage – something that is also anathema to reducing Ohio’s infant mortality rate.
- **Veto of Health Hubs** – Governor Kasich’s veto of the budget’s expansion of the Health Hubs program – which would have provided intensive care coordination to communities of color – is a step backward from would have been a promising step toward advancing health equity among Ohio’s children of color.
- **Children’s Services** – The loss of over \$17 million to county children’s services offices that are charged with protecting our most vulnerable children is devastating to Ohio’s children.
- **Department of Youth Services Cut Not Reinvested** – The budget’s \$32 million cut to the budget of the Department of Youth Services should have been reinvested in mental health services and other community-based programming for youth. While Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio is pleased that Ohio is incarcerating fewer youth, the money saved by not incarcerating children must be reallocated to ensuring that fewer youth enter the juvenile justice system. We must begin by ensuring better access to mental health care, substance abuse and addiction services, and other crucial safety net resources for youth and families.

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The Children’s Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.