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Kelly Vyzral, Senior Health Policy Associate
614-805-0204
kvyzral@childrensdefense.org

Alison Paxson, Communications & Policy Associate
937-206-2576
apaxson@childrensdefense.org

Thousands of Ohio Children at High Risk of Needlessly Losing Health Insurance Coverage when Public Health Emergency Ends

COLUMBUS, OH - During this historic pandemic and the ensuing economic and financial disruptions faced by thousands of Ohioans and their families, one saving grace for our children has been insurance coverage stability through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). These two programs have been a lifeline for the nearly one million Ohioans, many of whom have experienced changing jobs and fluctuating incomes throughout the pandemic.

[A new report](#) released today from researchers at Georgetown University Center for Children and Families provides estimates of the number of children enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP who are at high risk of becoming uninsured when the public health emergency (PHE) continuous coverage requirement is lifted. The report identifies which state policies and procedures put children at the greatest risk and includes state-level data.

"The economic loss experienced by many families will take years to regain," said Tracy Najera, Executive Director of Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. "Ohioans are resilient—we can do this, but we need policies that support rebuilding and strengthening our families and communities. This report is a roadmap for how Ohio can implement policies that protect families and children from health care loss."

The report shows that Ohio is doing many things right, an indication that state policymakers are paying attention to the link between health and thriving families and economies. Ohio has:

- A merged Medicaid/CHIP program that allows for a seamless transfer between Medicaid and CHIP when there is a change in family income;
- 12-month continuous coverage for families and children, without need for burdensome paperwork and reapplications every several months;
- Improving level of passive renewals so families don't have to resubmit information if Medicaid can verify eligibility through existing data and records;
- Recent extension of 12-month postpartum coverage for new moms.

However, there is one policy decision that is causing concern among Medicaid experts and advocates in Ohio. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) extended the



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timeframe for completing redeterminations to 12 months after the end of the PHE recognizing the enormous amount of work that needs to be done and the importance of being deliberative in the process. Yet in Ohio's biennial budget passed last summer (HB 110), legislators included a requirement that the Ohio Department of Medicaid confirm eligibility of all children and families enrolled in the Medicaid and CHIP program within 60 days after the end of the PHE, which is likely to occur before the end of this summer. Ohio's truncated redetermination period puts Ohioans at risk for mistakes that would leave them and their children without the healthcare they need to be healthy.

"We encourage Ohio to take advantage of the 12-month time frame allowed by CMS to complete the eligibility process," Kelly Vyzral, Senior Health Policy Associate with Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. "It is unfair to thousands of families and children at risk of losing their health care for Ohio to rush through this process."

Ohio has taken many steps to ensure that eligible families and children have quality accessible health care coverage. Now it's time to act and make sure we're protecting those families and children from loss of health care coverage as we emerge from the pandemic.

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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.