



CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW MONEY COULD SUSTAIN APPLE HEALTH FOR KIDS *Washington Wins \$17.6 Million for Progress on Children's Health*

(December 27, 2010) — Apple Health for Kids, Washington's health coverage program for children, has won \$17.6 million from the federal government – a timely windfall that could prevent thousands of children from losing their health coverage.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services awarded the money, a performance bonus, to Washington and 14 other states with health coverage programs that are doing outstanding work to enroll eligible children.

The new money comes two weeks after Governor Chris Gregoire proposed eliminating Apple Health for Kids for an estimated 27,000 children. Gov. Gregoire's proposal would jeopardize these children's health and success in school and give rise to more costly long-term consequences for our communities and our state's hospital system.

Gov. Gregoire and the state legislature created Apple Health for Kids in 2007 for families with no other options for affordable coverage, with the aim of covering all children by 2010. Washington state has made great strides in reaching this goal. The latest Washington State Population Survey showed that the number of uninsured children statewide has dropped over the last two years, from 4.6 to 3.4 percent – even as the poor labor market limits parents' access to employer-based health coverage.

“Covering all kids made good sense in good times; it makes even better sense now,” says Jon Gould, Deputy Director of the Children's Alliance. “Thousands of Washington families have turned to Apple Health for Kids as a lifeline for children in these tough times. Apple Health for Kids ensures that all kids get regular check-ups so that childhood illnesses don't become lifelong health problems.”

States that compete for annual performance bonuses have to show they have continued to make progress in covering uninsured children and streamlining

administration of their children's health insurance programs. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services recognized our state's program for five outstanding features, including 12-month continuous coverage, no requirement for an in-person interview upon enrollment, and the use of a single application for all children's health programs.

“By simplifying its procedures and cutting red tape, the state is reaping a much-needed financial gain from the federal government,” says Gould. “The performance bonus proves that Apple Health for Kids is not only popular and successful, but also cost-effective. Apple Health for Kids is paying off now – just as it will pay off in the future, as healthy children grow into healthy adults.”

The \$17.6 million award, unrestricted funding, will be in the state's coffers by the end of the year.

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The Children's Alliance is a statewide public policy advocacy organization that works at the state and federal level to ensure that all children have what they need to thrive. To learn more about the Children's Alliance, go to www.childrensalliance.org.