

Immediate Release

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State Could Save Millions by Enrolling Children of Public Employees in CHIP

[Charleston, WV]— As states prepare for full implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) next year, West Virginia could take advantage of one of the Act's lesser-known provisions to extend Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage to public employees. According to a report released today by the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, such a move could save the state and its public employees tens of millions of dollars while providing more comprehensive health coverage to thousands of children.

Until the ACA was passed, children of state and local employees covered by public employees' insurance were prohibited from enrolling in CHIP. Now at least seven states have allowed their public employees to enroll their children in CHIP, including Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Montana, Pennsylvania, Texas and Vermont.

In its report "West Virginia Should Extend CHIP Coverage to Public Employees," the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy estimates that nearly 9,000 children under the age of 19 currently enrolled in the Public Employees' Insurance Agency (PEIA) may qualify to enroll in CHIP. Depending on how many families move their children from PEIA to CHIP, state and local budgets could save up to \$6.7 million a year while the families themselves could save \$4.7 million.

"In an era of budget cuts where every dollar matters, West Virginia stands to save millions in state and local funds by allowing public employees to enroll their children into CHIP. Thousands of working West Virginia families will benefit from lower-cost, comprehensive health insurance for their children. It's a win-win," explained Brandon Merritt, Health Policy Analyst with the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy.

Governor Tomblin can request federal approval to implement this change which would save the state, and local governments, and their public employees tens of millions of dollars over the next decade. It would help state and local governments balance their budgets and put more money into the pockets of thousands of West Virginia families while improving access to health care for thousands of children in low-income families.

The full report is available at <http://www.wvpolicy.org/west-virginia-should-extend-chip-coverage-to-public-employees>.

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The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy (www.wvpolicy.org) is a public policy research organization that is nonpartisan, nonprofit, and statewide. The Center focuses on how policy decisions affect all West Virginians, especially low- and moderate-income families.