



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Alabama's rate of uninsured children plunged to 2.4 percent in 2016**

*Safeguarding Medicaid, ALL Kids is vital to protect coverage gains for state's children, Forrister says*

Nearly 49 of every 50 children in Alabama had health coverage in 2016, according to U.S. Census data released this week. Alabama's share of uninsured children fell to 2.4 percent last year, far below the national average and an improvement on the state's 2015 rate of 3.1 percent.

A huge piece of the credit for those recent coverage gains belongs to Medicaid and ALL Kids, Arise Citizens' Policy Project executive director Kimble Forrister said Thursday. Together, the programs cover nearly 800,000 Alabama children who live in households with low or moderate incomes.

"All children deserve consistent, appropriate health care, and Alabama does a good job of helping them get it," Forrister said. "Medicaid and ALL Kids help kids stay healthy so they can learn, play and thrive. It's essential to ensure these programs have the funding they need to continue providing health coverage for our most vulnerable residents."

Alabama's low rate of uninsured children stands out even more when considering that nearly one in four children (or 24.3 percent) in the state lived in poverty last year. That rate was the sixth highest in the country and far worse than the 19.1 percent national rate. Overall, 17.1 percent of Alabamians lived below the poverty line in 2016, and 9.1 percent of the state's residents lacked health insurance.

Congressional decisions in the coming weeks will shape the future of Medicaid and ALL Kids for years to come. Federal funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (known as ALL Kids in Alabama) is set to expire Sept. 30 unless Congress renews it. And a health care plan offered by Sens. Bill Cassidy, R-La., and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., would impose Medicaid funding caps that would force deep cuts to coverage for children, seniors, and people with disabilities over time.

"Children's health care is too important to be left up to chance," Forrister said. "We urge Congress to protect Medicaid and ALL Kids and work together in a bipartisan way to make health care more accessible and more affordable for all Americans."

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[Arise Citizens' Policy Project](#) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan coalition of congregations, organizations and individuals promoting public policies to improve the lives of low-income Alabamians.