

News Release

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Contact: Janet Byrd
503-226-3001 ext 103
or 503-516-4698

Oregon Receives a "C", Advocates Call for Changes

Data Highlights Need for Action to Expand Economic Opportunity

Portland, OR - Oregon advocates, in conjunction with a national economic nonprofit, the Corporation for Enterprise Development, released the *2009-2010 Assets & Opportunity Scorecard* this morning. The *Scorecard* gives Oregon a "C" and highlights areas for improvement. To help more Oregonians, the state could expand the refundable earned income tax credit, remove asset limits for public benefits and help to promote and preserve homeownership.

"Budgets are moral documents", said Reverend Lowell Greathouse of First United Methodist Church and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. " They reflect the moral judgements and choices we make as individuals and a society. But scorecards, such as the *Assets and Opportunity Scorecard* done by CFED, are moral documents as well. They take the pulse of our performance as a society, they give definition to what is often invisible to us, and they point us in directions where we can make a difference in the world."

"Expanding the earned income tax credit will help low-income working Oregonians with children afford housing, food and other necessities," says Oregon Center for Public Policy Director Chuck Sheketoff, "Today too many Oregonians are left struggling to make ends meet." Oregon advocates call on the state to increase the value of the Oregon credit to 18% of the federal credit.

"Affordable housing gives people an opportunity to build better lives," said Victor Merced, Director of Oregon Housing and Community Services, "We can do more to promote and preserve homeownership in Oregon- particularly those struggling to remain in their homes at this time." The *2009-2010 Assets & Opportunity Scorecard* reveals that Oregon is 46th in the County in our rate of homeownership. Advocates call on Oregon to ensure access to foreclosure prevention services and safe, affordable mortgage products.

"Today, too many Oregonians are struggling to make ends meet," said Janet Byrd, Executive Director of Neighborhood Partnerships. "By removing the remaining asset limits for public benefits, we would encourage savings and employment. Today, many people are forced to spend down savings to access needed public benefits in this time of crisis. This sends the wrong message." Oregon should remove restrictive asset limits and allow people to access help when they need it.

One measure not included in the *Scorecard* but important to Oregon advocates is food security. " Food Stamp participation increased by 31% in the last year and emergency food box distribution reached an all time high in August" says Patti Whitney-Wise, Executive Director of the Oregon Hunger Task Force. " Oregon has grappled with high hunger rates for a decade and made good progress during the last upturn in the economy. The return to high hunger numbers points to the need for longer-term structural solutions." Oregon

Advocates believe the CFED recommendations will help move more families out of hunger and towards food security.

Oregon is doing well in important business and education matters but lags behind national performance in annual pay, extreme asset poverty and health care for adults, according to a report released today by the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED), a national economic nonprofit. The state earned a "C" on the *2009-2010 Assets & Opportunity Scorecard*, with Oregon showing room for improvement in important financial assets and income measures, as well as health care.

CFED's Assets and Opportunity Scorecard - online at scorecard.cfed.org - measures the financial security of families in the United States by looking beyond just income to the whole picture of building ownership and protecting against financial setbacks. The Scorecard ranks 50 states and the District of Columbia on 58 performance measures in the areas of Financial Assets & Income, Businesses & Jobs, Housing & Homeownership, Health Care and Education.

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Neighborhood Partnerships is a statewide non-profit organization with the mission to create opportunity for low income people. Neighborhood Partnerships has a leadership role in numerous statewide and regional initiatives, including: acting as convener of the Housing Alliance, a statewide coalition aimed at increasing housing opportunity; managing the Oregon Individual Development Account Initiative on behalf of the State of Oregon; and administering Bridges to Housing, a metro area collaboration to better serve high need homeless families.

Oregon Thrives works to create healthy and prosperous communities where all have access to family wage jobs, quality education, nutritious food, stable homes and services that promote health and wellness. It is an emerging coalition of advocacy and service organizations in Oregon. Current steering committee members are: Community Action Programs of Oregon; Oregon Hunger Task Force; Oregon Food Bank; Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon; Oregon Housing and Community Services; Oregon Center for Public Policy; and Neighborhood Partnerships.

CFED expands economic opportunity by helping Americans and their children build assets, save for the future, start and grow businesses, pursue education and become homeowners. They identify, refine and help realize good ideas and develop partnerships to promote lasting change. They bring together community practice, public policy and private markets in new and effective ways to achieve greater economic impact. Established in 1979 as the Corporation for Enterprise Development, CFED works nationally and internationally through its offices in Washington, DC; Durham, North Carolina; and San Francisco, California.

Jerralynn Ness, Executive Director
Community Action
1001 SW Baseline St
Hillsboro, OR 97123
503-693-3251
jness@caowash.org

Janet Byrd, Executive Director
Neighborhood Partnerships
1020 SW Taylor, Suite 680
Portland, OR 97205
503-226-3001 ext 103
Cell: 503-516-4698
jbyrd@neighborhoodpartnerships.org
www.neighborhoodpartnerships.org

Rev. Lowell Greathouse
Minister of Discipleship, First United Methodist Church, Portland
President of the Board of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
(503) 228-3195 (church)
Lgreathouse@fumcpdx.org

Patti Whitney-Wise, Director
Oregon Hunger Task Force
4110 SE Hawthorne Blvd.
Portland, OR 97214
Work: 503-595-5501
Cell: 503-757-8027

Charles Sheketoff, Executive Director
Oregon Center for Public Policy
204 N. First, Suite C
PO Box 7
Silverton, OR 97381
tel. 503.873.1201, ext. 331
csheketoff@ocpp.org

Victor Merced, Director
Oregon Housing and Community Services
725 Summer St NE, Suite B
Salem, OR 97301-1266
Phone: 503.986.2005
www.ohcs.oregon.gov