



The Kid Angle

Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children

The crisis in children's health care

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As the country approaches another tough season of COVID-19 and the rise of long-suppressed diseases (we're looking at you polio), a confluence of factors plagues the children's health care system:

- [Surging cases of pediatric RSV](#) (respiratory syncytial virus), now perpetually in season
- An alarming — and growing — [shortage of children's hospital beds](#), even in children's hospitals
- Emergency rooms where [children suffering mental health crises may wait weeks](#) — **weeks** — for care
- A [decline in routine childhood vaccinations](#), fueled by disinformation and pandemic-era delays, and a simultaneous [rise in long-dormant diseases such as polio](#)
- Continued "[ignorance, dismissal, or disrespect from doctors](#)" by families facing pediatric Long COVID
- A shortage of pediatric health care providers — especially in mental health — combined with a [steady decline in the number of students entering pediatric residencies](#)
- [Growing debt among families](#) seeking mental health care for their children as [parity remains unenforced](#)
- The approaching end of the pandemic-era public health emergency, which will leave an estimated 7 million children — [most of them Black and brown, most of them low-income](#) — without insurance
- A [too-early increase](#) in the number of flu and COVID cases in children, contributing to long waits in ERs and delays in care

If children's health care is not already in crisis, it seems to be headed that way. Against this backdrop First Focus on Children continues to believe more needs to be done to encourage our youngest children to stay up-to-date on their vaccines, including receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, and for [important public health measures to be taken to protect children](#). We also continue to press Congress to establish [Medicaid continuous coverage for children until age 6](#), as Oregon has done. And to [make the Children's Health Insurance Program permanent](#), giving it the same status as every other federal health insurance program. Together, Medicaid and CHIP insure roughly half of all children in the United States.

Obviously, insuring children won't end the [pediatric provider shortage](#) or change [the reimbursement rates leading hospitals to cut pediatric beds in favor of more lucrative adult beds](#). But when kids are insured they are more likely to get the care they need. Keeping children insured will help them stay healthy while we push lawmakers to address these long-term issues.

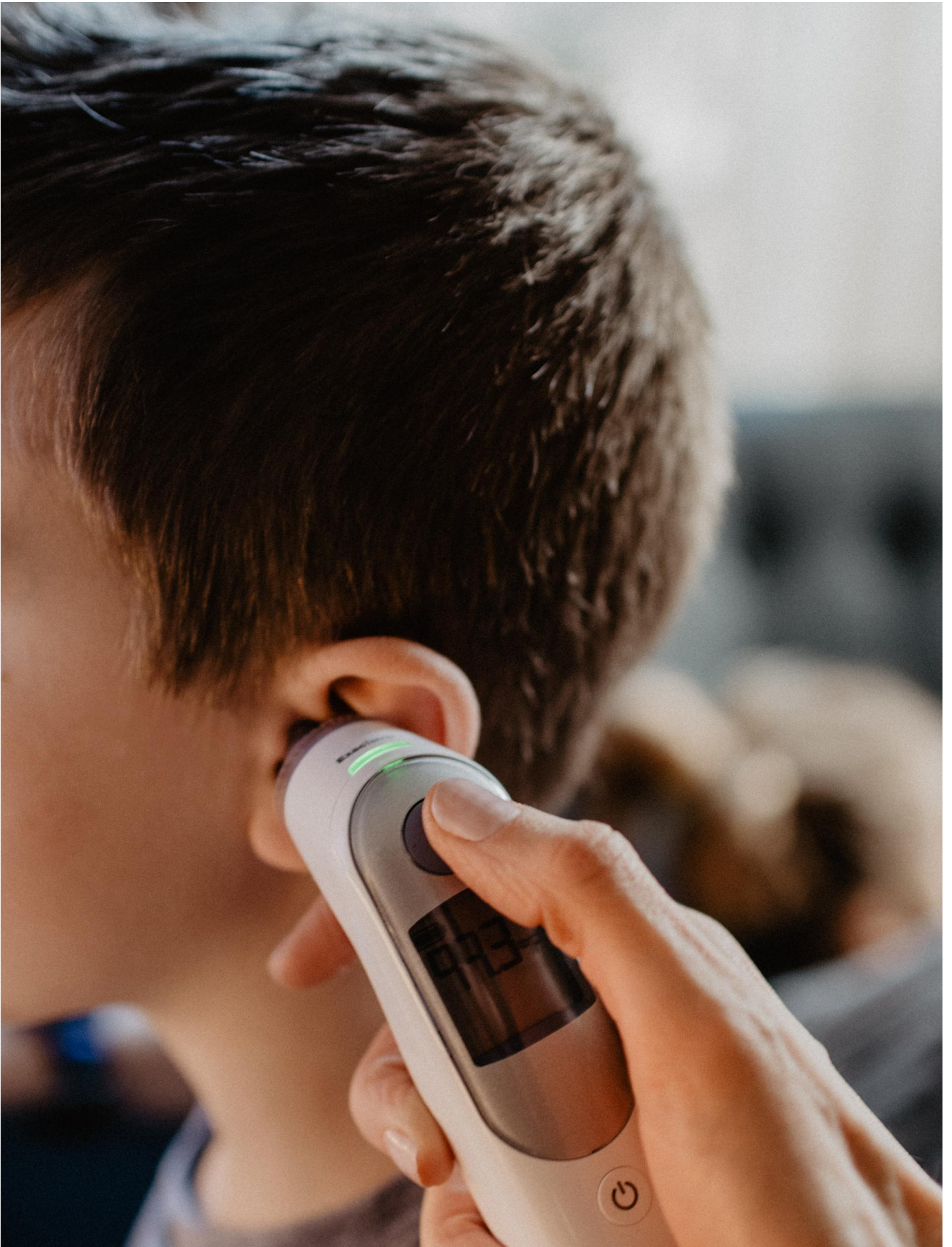




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