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**Census data: federal policies helping Ohioans get ahead**

New data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau show that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and federal programs like food assistance and refundable tax credits for working families help keep Ohioans healthy and reduce barriers to getting ahead.

The data show that the ACA helped reduce the number of Ohioans without health insurance by 614,000 since the Act was fully implemented in 2013. The uninsured rate in Ohio continued to fall in 2016 by -0.9 percent to just 5.6 percent. Nationally, the uninsured rate stood at 8.8 percent last year.

Medicaid expansion has helped more Ohioans have health care coverage. According to the Census, more than 2.4 million Ohioans are covered by Medicaid. Expansion helps explain why Ohio has a much lower uninsured rate than the nation. The Census found that states that expanded Medicaid eligibility had lower uninsured rates than non-expansion states, across all poverty levels.

“Thanks to the ACA, more Ohioans can access the health care they need so they can work, take care of their families and contribute to the vibrancy of our communities. Every ACA repeal and replace bill would have ended the expansion, putting their coverage at risk,” said Hannah Halbert, researcher at Policy Matters Ohio.

Separate data from the Supplemental Poverty Measure was also released today by the Census. This measure shows how costs, taxes, tax credits, and benefits like food assistance raise or lower the official poverty rate. In Ohio, this more comprehensive measure shows 297,000 fewer Ohioans lived in poverty when these supports were considered. Nationally, Social Security prevented more than 26 million from living in poverty. Refundable tax credits like the Earned Income Tax Credit sent money back to working families allowing more than 8 million to live above poverty. Food Assistance (SNAP) helped families afford food and kept 3.6 million from falling into poverty.

“Health, hunger, and poverty have all been improved in Ohio thanks to federal policy," said Halbert. “These are cornerstones of success at work and in school. Budget proposals by the U.S. House and by the Trump administration threaten many of these programs. Instead, policymakers should strengthen what is working. These programs are working for Ohio.”

Today’s data brought additional good news for the nation. The number of people working full-time year-round increased last year by 2.2 million. Median household income rose for the second consecutive year, to $59,000, a marked increase of 3.2 percent from 2015. The Midwest did not share in this growth -- income for the region was essentially unchanged. The official poverty rate for the nation fell to 12.7 percent. Nationally, the poverty rate in 2016 was statistically the same as the rate in 2007, the year before the last recession.

“Overall, today's data shows that policies intended to help people get ahead are working for millions," Halbert said. "America still has a long way to go to remove barriers that prevent all people, regardless of race, gender or geography, to thrive. Eliminating programs that make a difference in the lives of millions would be a clear step backwards.”

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*Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute*

*with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.*