

From: [DConners](#)
To: [Board of Commissioners; Clerk](#)
Subject: Early Childhood Services Budget
Date: Saturday, September 18, 2021 12:14:56 PM

Please place these comments into the record for the special Leelanau BOC meeting on Monday and the regular BOC meeting on Tuesday. Thank you!

Dear Commissioners,

I am a Solon Township resident writing to you about the de-funding of the early childhood services that were voted into existence by voters. I find your vote to zero out the budget to be extremely harmful and I ask you to reverse your action.

First of all, I cannot see how constituents can believe the commission will actually set and carry out goals if it sets this alarming precedent of dismissing a public vote. This has a whip-lash effect and is only going to sow more division when we really need to come together to actually get things done. It is anti-democratic, and I ask those of you who disagree with this program to consider how you would feel if there was a program you supported that voters passed and a future commission unilaterally decided to defund it.

Secondly, I am 65 but support these services. It is a proven program that is pro-family, pro-parents, and pro-children. At a minimum, if there are concerns about the program then commissioners should let the program exist for a full year of in-person services—which were disrupted by COVID, not any proven lack of interest--and then evaluate it. If you don't fund the program, you are simply setting Parenting Communities up for failure, and there has been so much thought and time put into it that that would be a tremendous loss.

It also appears that some commissioner concerns are founded on misunderstandings or incomplete information. The Quebec study that Chairman Bunek referenced, for example, is about childcare, and not the type of early childhood services that the millage funds. Some commissioners feel the program is duplicative. But the Parenting Communities program, as I understand it, was created to fill gaps of services not already offered. I would like to see commissioners get some side-by-side comparisons of existing programs. I'm unclear why there seems to be some commissioner hostility toward the health department, but it also feels valuable to me to have the program housed there. For families that are struggling to work a couple jobs to make ends meet, having a one-stop place for multiple services and resources is really valuable.

Sincerely,

Diane Conners, 11131 S. Cedar Rd., Cedar, MI