

TO: Leelanau County Board of Commissioners

RE: Early Childhood Funding

I watched the entire Executive Board Meeting, and was startled to hear that the proposed budget eliminated funding for Early Childhood programming--the very money we VOTED to appropriate, just two years ago.

I do not have children or grandchildren who will benefit from this programming, but I was an enthusiastic supporter of the proposal.

Here's why: I want to live in a county that welcomes families at all income levels. I know that we will be a healthier and more stable community--economically, medically, educationally--by providing free and low-cost programs for our youngest citizens. We will attract new people to Leelanau County--young people to fill jobs, children to fill schools. I was thrilled when the measure passed by a substantial margin. Good, I thought. People here (including the old, white, rich people who long-time residents often accuse of not caring about lower-income legacy families) want to support a healthy start for our youngest citizens. When it comes to bang for your buck, early childhood programming pays back more dividends than nearly any other initiative.

PLEASE VOTE to MAINTAIN FUNDING for EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS. I am also in favor of getting a legal opinion about rescinded funding that has been approved by voters.

Even more troubling were Commissioners' comments planting doubt that the outcome of the election was somehow invalid. Many school board and millage elections are held on off-years; it separates them from the two-year election cycle and allows people to focus on local issues.

Seeding doubt about certified election results is a reckless and dangerous game. When Commissioner Bunek remarked that it was the responsibility of the County Commission to 'fix' election results he and other Commissioners didn't like, he crossed a line from democratic to authoritarian. When asked if that was what he meant, he confirmed it. This is unacceptable.

Nancy Flanagan, Solon Township

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