

September 20, 2021

To the Leelanau County Board of Commissioners:

We, the undersigned organizations, businesses, and individuals, are stunned and disappointed by the action of the Leelanau County Commissioners on September 14, 2021 to reduce to 0.00 mills the early childhood millage approved by the voters of Leelanau County in 2019. This voter-approved millage pays for **services and supports that are available to all families** raising young children Leelanau County, and **ensures there are no duplications** or gaps.

At a time when children and families, as well as our businesses and communities need these supports more than ever, this is a step in the wrong direction. We know, based on our own local, regional, and statewide research, that communities that invest in high quality early childhood programming, like Parenting Communities, can prevent achievement gaps before they happen. A proactive, community-based approach ensures parents have the resources they need to support the physical, behavioral, and intellectual development of their young children, and prepares their children for kindergarten and success in school. Research by Nobel-laureate economist James Heckman and others shows convincingly that investments in quality early childhood programs are a more effective and economical way to ensure children graduate from high school on time, become productive members of society, and live healthier lives.

The early childhood millage was passed by Leelanau County voters because residents wish to support parents in their roles as their children's first and best teachers, create opportunities for children to participate in activities that promote social-emotional development which is fundamental to school readiness, and build a basis for lifelong health. The millage **does NOT pay for child care** or preschool, and **does NOT duplicate services** that are available to low-income families. The millage makes it possible for all families to participate in high quality early childhood programs and activities – something we wish for all children and parents.

We urge the Leelanau County Commissioners to reconsider their intention to reduce the early childhood millage, and **honor the will of the voters**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dave Mengebier, President and CEO, Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation
Emily Modrall, Chief of Staff, Boomerang Catapult LLC
Ginger Kadlec, Executive Director, Traverse Bay Children's Advocacy Center
Dr. Nick Ceglarek, Superintendent, Northwest Education Services
Jean Derenzy, Chief Executive Officer, Traverse City Downtown Development Authority
Sakura Takano, Chief Executive Officer, Rotary Charities
Seth Johnson, Executive Director, United Way of Northwest Michigan
Trevor Tkach, President and CEO, Traverse City Tourism
Trey Devey, President, Interlochen Center for the Arts
Warren Call, President and CEO, Traverse Connect
Yarrow Brown, Executive Director, Housing North