

**From:** Alma Vasquez <arcv3@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, September 21, 2021 2:10 AM

**To:** Michelle Crocker <mcrocker@leelanau.gov>; Chet Janik <cjanik@leelanau.gov>

**Cc:** Clerk <Clerk@leelanau.gov>

**Subject:** Letter for LBOC

09/21/2021

The letter is for Public Comment for the Leelanau Board of Commissioners. This is for public record.

Dear Leelanau Board of Commissioners,

Yes, that was the Leelanau Board of Commissioners, not the Solon Board of Commissioners, not the Cleveland Board of Commissioners. While yes, you have an obligation to your district, you also have an obligation to all of Leelanau County. We are a community. Leelanau County Community. As leaders and as good humans, you should want to see all of Leelanau County be safe and prosper. If one district fails it will impact the others. Yes, you have an obligation to the people who elected you to Commissioners, does that mean they are the only ones that matter? Does that mean the people that did not vote for you in your district do not matter? Does that mean the person who may have not made it out to the voting pole that day does not matter? Each and every person should matter in your district and in our county!

Just like several commissioners keep stating that the numbers for the votes for the mileage for Early Childhood Development are not accurate because not everyone made it to the polls to cast their vote. Do you really think that every single person makes it to each and every election? While yes, it is our civic duty to do so, it is those that make it to the voting polls that have their vote counted. Voters know that. It happens all across our nation. If you overturned an outcome to an election because not everyone casted a vote then we'd have to overturn most all items, if not all! Then why have an election at all?

There are many lessons we can all learn from this, including making sure to do our civic duty and GO VOTE! Those that did not vote last time will know to go VOTE next election if they don't want it to pass when it is on the ballot again.

As you cast your vote tomorrow on this Early Childhood Development mileage you are sending Leelanau County Voters and residents several messages. You will also be sending that message to others throughout our state and even nationally. Your actions as your

words speak volumes! What you decide tomorrow, to choose to overturn the mileage or to uphold the vote of the people, will tell the people if you honor and respect the process of the United States of America election process. It will tell us if you value families. It will tell us if you value children of all ages. You either support children or you don't. I have seen you make a good decision. I have seen you support the youth. I heard and saw each of you make positive comments on how reaching our youth is the key. Some of you mentioned if we can reach our youth we can reach the families. Intervention to help our community! I have also seen some of you, do a complete 360 and say you want to overturn a mileage that was passed by the people to support Early Childhood development that supports children from 0-5 and their families. I am not twisting anything, you are on record. Filmed for all to hear and see for themselves. Tell me, do you really think that we should wait to reach and impact children in their teens when we can reach them and their families early on at birth to 5 years old and in doing so help them prosper, grow, and develop physically and mentally before their teen years that is what studies have proven is effective in promoting and enhancing the chances of graduating high school and going onto higher education? Do families and children matter to you? Your vote tomorrow will tell us!

Please stop stereotyping people. People of all walks of life benefit and use Early Childhood Development programs. It can be your doctor or nurse. It could be your lawyer. It could be your server at the local restaurant serving you; breakfast, lunch, or dinner. It could be the cashier. It could be the social worker. It could be an educator. It could be a politician. It could be the bus driver. It could be a business owner of any local business. It could be the farmer or the farm worker that is providing the strawberries, apples, and cherries you eat.

It could be the single mother or the single father that is having home visits or other parenting community items such as play groups which is how children learn and grow physically and developmentally. There is studies and evidence that supports that too. Please do your research better yet, I encourage you to participate and engage with these children and families and see for yourself whose lives you are directly impacting and perhaps changing the course of the outcome of their future.

It could be a married couple or unmarried couple with children. It would be an aunt or grandparent that had to take on the parenting role for any number of reasons. It could be the children lost their parents to COVID or the parents are struggling because of COVID or other health related issues. It could be physical or mental health issues the parent(s) struggles with. The child or children could have physical or mental health issues and these Parenting Communities programs help them overcome some of those barriers. It could be healthy growing children. There is evidence that supports that Early Childhood Development is effective and is an investment to communities. I am pretty sure research shows that for every dollar we spend on Early Childhood Development our community receives 7 dollars back.

While I do not have specific numbers to tell you, I have seen the children, I did home visits for prosper and grow and graduate from our local schools. They are now in college. I have served on the Leelanau Children's Center Board of Directors. I have worked for Parenting Communities for several years. It is awesome & rewarding to see 5, 10, 20 years later how those home-visits and play groups helped those children and families prosper. You can't put a price tag on that! It is an investment! Those individuals are residents contributing to our society and local economy.

My family and I received Early Childhood Development while our sons were young. It greatly impacted our lives and each of us is better for it today. We are still connected to the home-visitors and community members we were able to meet, connect, and collaborate with through those programs. Those people are part of our village then and now!

When one of my sons continuously got ear infections and the doctors wanted to put tubes in his ears, I was fearful to do so as I lost my hearing due to having tubes put in my ears. It was the home visitor that helped me and my husband connect and find additional information and resources to help us make a better informed decision including finding peace and comfort in that decision. This was not because we were not good parents, it was that we wanted to do what was best for our son. We did not want him to have hearing damage and have to face the same barriers I have had to face all of my life due to hearing loss. It was a relief to have support and the resources that Parenting Communities offered. My son had the surgery and all went well. When we had our 2nd son, we were more experienced and knew what to do when he had numerous ear infections. Those early years for us could have taken a much different turn if it had not been for the program. I am proud and excited to be able to say both my sons are healthy, educated and prospering.

My family and I, we all contribute to our community and economy. We work, we buy goods and services. We volunteer to help local programs including making donations because we believe in helping others and giving back to our community. We understand it takes a village. Leelanau County is our home! It is our village!

Many families who receive Early Childhood Development services give back to their communities by volunteering their time to different programs and are active community members. In addition they work, live, and spend their dollars here in our community therefore they not only work in our local businesses, they help keep our businesses and economy thriving by working and spending their money here. Please we the voters and residents of Leelanau County would like to know why you'd want to take away from the very people who are the backbone of our community? Yes, I know some of you say you did not motion or support to eliminate the program. You said you wanted to make it \$0.00 funds. Call it what you want, it is making the funds 0.00. If there are \$0.00 funds, the last I checked \$0.00 means no funds. It is the same as eliminating it. In your perspective you are not eliminating it because it is funded by different sources but that was not the source that the VOTERS of Leelanau County passed! Those other sources you talk about may be available to some but not available to others. As anyone who has worked in the public sector or received services knows, not all local, state, and federal programs are open and available to all as often there is an application process and particular criteria that people have to meet to receive such services. With the mileage for Early Childhood Development anyone who needs their services can receive it. In fact if you don't need it or want it you do not have to have it. The Health Department does not force anyone to use Early Childhood Development services. It is there for those that want and need it. This is true for all local, state, and federal programs. Nobody can force anyone to participate in any of the programs. It is the decision of the person who is applying for services to receive them or not. I have worked for the Department of Health and Human Services. I currently work for Michigan Rehabilitation Services. People receiving those services apply for them; nobody forces them. They also have to be found eligible for those services unfortunately not everyone is eligible for services. Please remember that you make your decision tomorrow. If you are basing it on double dipping and covering for services that are offered by others then the county would not be funding anything. Early Childhood directly and indirectly

impacts each and everyone of us and our local economy even if some people don't realize it.

Question, if Commissioners are not protecting all of Leelanau County, and upholding the Election process and you are not funding anything because most, if not all things you fund can be funded by another means, then what exactly are the commissioners elected to do?

In addition, all of you passed an anti-racism resolution to help protect all people of Leelanau County of all diverse backgrounds, which you have not done anything on since you passed it but one or two things in over a year.... If you are protecting, honoring, respecting all people, diversity and inclusion, how are you protecting, respecting, and honoring young families and children by trying to overturn the Early Childhood Development program mileage?

Again, I ask you what kind of Leelanau County do you want to see in 5 years, 10, or 20 years? What kind of Leelanau do you want your children, grandchildren, and their children to live in?

Do you think that Leelanau County can thrive on only catering to the retirees?  
Do you think those retirees are going to work in our local businesses 40 hours a week or more?  
Do you want all residents of Leelanau County to look and be just like you?

Your vote tomorrow will tell us!

Do you want to do what is right and best for all people or just the people in your bubble?

Will you help your neighbors or just your particular voters?

Will you be for HUMAN RIGHTS or for your particular party?

Your vote tomorrow will tell us!

It takes a VILLAGE!

You are our leaders, you are part of our VILLAGE, help protect and prosper our VILLAGE that IS your responsibility as Commissioners!

Sincerely a very concerned citizen,

Alma R. Vasquez