

From: [Corey Fernandez](#)
To: [Clerk](#)
Subject: This statement is intended to be shared as a public comment regarding the Early Childhood Millage
Date: Tuesday, September 21, 2021 8:54:52 AM

This is Corey Fernandez and Jessica Hale. We're new county residents living in Suttons Bay. We are sharing our support for the Leelanau Early Childhood program - Parenting Communities.

Our children are 4-year old Aden and 3-year old Ayla. Prior to the pandemic, Aden and Ayla attended daycare. This essential community program stopped abruptly 19 months ago. Due to eventual funding cuts, it never reopened.

We're both working parents with full-time jobs. We've lived a pandemic life like so many parents with young children who aren't old enough for primary school. This means no educational and social outlets beyond our home. We can't help but think of the thousands of interactions our kids should've had with other kids by now. These early childhood interactions accelerate kids' communication, social emotional intelligence and problem solving skills.

Thankfully, we discovered a meaningful solution this past June. After 15 months of social isolation, Parenting Communities became our first weekly opportunity to become a part of the community and learn how to grow alongside the county's young families.

Our family has attended every Tuesday morning playgroup in Northport. Without fail, Aden and Ayla proudly recite the names of their playmates when returning home for lunch, and they nudge us to read and reread and reread their handpicked books funded through the voter approved millage. We can't wait to return every Tuesday.

For parents like us, Parenting Communities is helping us take our first steps as supportive and active community members. We're tremendously grateful for the Parenting Communities team - especially Hollie Anderson - for the ways they continue to facilitate meaningful connections between parents and neighbors. Together, we're able to form a more connected community and readily support one another. These types of connections help the county address the needs of the collective community in more personal, high touch ways.

This essential program is accessible to all. It's a lifeline for families who are still surviving through our pandemic and who are seeking opportunities to eventually thrive here.

Should the Board of Commissioners move forward with funding cuts, then we're new residents who've been swiftly informed of four commissioners who blocked families from getting a boost they sorely need right now.

Our county's future stability depends on citizens and elected officials making investments in families' health and wellness. Parenting Communities is doing this essential work already today, and the results should determine its future fate...not four commissioners making on-the-fly adjustments as they see fit.

Thank you for your time today. We want to see this approved funding reinstated for the sake of all young children and parents in our community.

Sincerely,

Corey Fernandez and Jessica Hale