

I would like this comment to be read and recorded as part of the public comment for the BOC meeting Tuesday 9/21

To the Board of Commissioners in Leelanau County:

I have been a property owner and part-time/full time resident of Glen Arbor for more than 30 years. I cannot believe the audacity and short-sightedness of some of our county commissioners in your decision to essentially de-fund the Early Childhood Services/Parenting Communities program.

Whether the voters voted this program in because they recognized the importance of early childhood intervention or because they are fiscally conscious, the reasoning is the same. Studies show that this type of support for families of young children benefits not only the child and the supported family, but communities and society as a whole.

As you have repeatedly been reminded by voters since your decision last week, research shows parents and children who are supported in early childhood have:

- Lower substance abuse rates
- Half as many criminal arrests
- Better problem-solving skills
- Lower divorce rates
- Less depression
- Lower teen pregnancy rates
- Lower retention/special education needs
- Higher graduation rates
- More likelihood to attend college
- Higher lifelong earnings

If you want to make this about cost savings (which is the only explanation I can think of as to your motivation for negating the voters' decision), then investing in our children through programs like this is the path to that goal. It is the logical conclusion that the above stated benefits of early childhood education and support translate into a decrease in the need for publicly funded:

- Substance abuse programs
- Criminal processing and incarceration
- Mental health programs
- Emotional and financial support services for struggling families
- Financial support for teen parents
- Remedial education

I would like to think the voters in Leelanau county approved this millage because they want to be part of a community that "lifts everyone's boats" and not purely because it is a cost saving measure. Regardless of the motivation, however, the arguments remain the same in both cases. As our commissioners, we rely on you to respect our decisions, not override them using some absurd and blatantly, short-sighted logic.

Kathy Cornillie
Glen Arbor

