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August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

Dear Leelanau County Board of Commissioners,

The Benzie Leelanau District Health Department has been made aware of the exploration conducted by the Leelanau County Early Childhood County Committee to determine the current status of early childhood family needs and supports. One of the recommendations made by the committee is to continue and expand high-quality and universally available home visiting services currently provided by Parenting Communities.

As BLDHD is currently a provider of home visiting services to pregnant and parenting families, we are very well aware of the importance of support for families in the early days of parenting. A great deal of brain development happens before children enter school, even pre-school, and unfortunately that is too often the first point of access for support and services. The Health Department provides early childhood home visiting services through a variety of programs such as Healthy Futures and the Maternal Infant Health Program however most of these programs include eligibility requirements or frequency limitations. Unfortunately, this often leaves families without access to the services they need. There is a growing body of evidence that confirms that families who receive home visiting services through many of these programs experience better health, fewer adverse outcomes, and improved school readiness.

Because BLDHD has contracted to provide home visiting services through the Parenting Communities program for a number of years, we are very familiar with how it fits into the fabric of supportive programs available for families in Leelanau County. We are also familiar with the costs and benefits of the program and our staff have the expertise needed to provide leadership for the activities. For these reasons and because we feel it is important to carefully coordinate like services, we are glad to be part of the conversation around the potential for expansion of this program.

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department supports the concept of expanding the existing home visiting services we provide through Parenting Communities. There are still many unknown variables but we remain interested in exploring our capacity and to discuss our potential role in oversight and operations should a funding opportunity become available.

Sincerely,

Lisa Peacock, MSN, RN, WHNP-BC  
Health Officer

Joshua Meyerson, MD, MPH  
Medical Director