

**From:** [Amanda Blanck](#)  
**To:** [Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** This statement is intended to be shared as public comment regarding the Early Childhood Millage  
**Date:** Saturday, September 18, 2021 9:12:42 AM

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Please vote to continue funding for the Early Childhood Millage that supports Parenting Communities of Leelanau.

The more you value something, the more energy you will put toward it. The less you value something the less energy you will give toward it. Every vote is a demonstration of our values as a community. Every vote is the opportunity to ask ourselves what do we value and why? What deserves our energy and what doesn't?

### **So, what do we value as a community?**

We moved here because we wanted to raise our son in a place with people who value nurturing and protecting the environment (nature and communities). We know we will thrive when have:

- happy people, happy places
- balance in growth and quality of life
- clean, safe, sustainable
- quality water and food
- quality public education
- opportunity to work

We hope Leelanau County and the greater area continues to aspire toward and reflect these values.

### **My personal experience and its impact**

I am a mom of a 2-year-old, wife, successful entrepreneur, and much more. Being a mom I've never felt more purpose, I've also never felt more isolation, stress, and fatigue. I question my decisions as a parent, not being an expert in this field, I doubt myself. Is it supposed to be this hard? I am supposed to be this tired? I must be doing something wrong. I want to set my son up for success, am I doing all that I can do to do that?

- I only know what I know, that's why I need access to the experts to help guide my decisions.
- I need to belong to a group who are living similar experiences at the same time to help validate my feelings, provide resources to empower me with better choices and outcomes.
- I need a safe place to interrupt the cycles of fatigue, isolation, self-doubt so they don't get the best of me and my ability to parent.
- I need a vetted, trusted organization to organize opportunities for me to connect, learn, and share.

I've attended play groups, events, and home visits. The staff are professional, kind, talented, and generous with their abilities. I left every experience impressed with the quality of interactions and event outcome.

From these opportunities to interact I've made new friends, learned new tools, felt more encouraged, and felt less depressed. I know I have someone looking out for me, setting me up for success to help set my son up for success in the near and far future. People learn best in groups. We are social creatures who need affordable access to experts and tools.

### **The greater impact, the big picture**

The research continues to demonstrate how crucial the first three years of a child's life is. It's a strong predictor of their outcomes for the rest of their life. Invest in early childhood to minimize the risk of long-term costs and more negative implications.

Additionally, in an analysis by David McMillan and David Chavis (1986) and many other previous studies found four factors consistently show up as community attributes we all look for in a good community.

- **Membership** - that feeling that part of us is invested in the community, that we have a right to belong and feel welcome
- **Influence** - that sense that we have some say in the community issues that affect us and that our perspectives are appreciated and respected
- **Integration and fulfillment of needs** - based on the notion that the community has numerous opportunities for both individual and social fulfillment including basic needs, recreation, and social interaction. Some scholars have referred to this as the meeting the needs of 'whole person' in all our roles, (e.g. goods, services, recreation, desirable social interaction activities etc.)
- **Shared emotional connection** - based in part of shared history or sense of community and quality of interactions within the community

Another study comes from the Soul of the Community Project conducted in 26 communities across the nation by the [Knight Foundation](#) and Gallup (2010). The focus of this work was to look at those factors that facilitate "community attachment".

The 10 community characteristics that most influenced community attachment (in order of importance) were: **social offerings, openness, aesthetics, education, and basic services.**

### **Again, what do we value as a community?**

Think about... what are some of the most positive influential moments in your life?

I bet it is a person that made such a positive, transformational impact on your life that enabled you to be who you are today.

As you vote, think about where our resources can make the most impact near and long-term.

Thank you for all that you do for this community. My environment is what enables the best within me so I can then enable the best within others.

Fondly,  
Amanda

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