



FLORIDA CHILDREN'S SERVICES COUNCIL

Florida Children's Services Council SB 1216/HB1227 - Unnecessary Threat to Children's Programs

CSCs are Approved by the People, Representative of the People

- Children's Services Councils were created for the children by the people.
- Citizens wanted and voted to have local, independent bodies that focus on the needs of their county's kids – the Children's Services Councils.
- Local voters have been empowered to establish dedicated and stable funding sources set aside for programs that improve the lives of the children in their area. In counties with a CSC, voters have taken advantage of this right.
- In most CSC counties, the formation of a Children's Services Council was initiated by community leaders. However, that's only the beginning of the process.
- To create a Children's Services Council, the county commission must vote to place it on the ballot. Then the county's voters must pass a referendum to formally establish the Council.
- The voters and the people they elected to represent them – their county commissioners – are the ones responsible for creating the CSC.
- The people continue to be represented on Children's Services Council boards, through positions that include elected officials such as county commissioners, school board members and judges.

CSCs are a Local Funding Solution

- In these tough economic times, Florida lawmakers are struggling to fund vital programs that serve Florida's children, such as VPK and School Readiness.
- The state's budget crisis has forced the Legislature to cut deeply into health and human services programs, and consider the elimination of entire programs such as Healthy Families.
- Local communities with Children's Services Councils have done the fiscally responsible thing by creating a local revenue stream to support children's programs needed in their hometowns.
- SB 1216/HB 1227 would jeopardize individual counties' ability to fund their own local programs for children and likely increase dependence on state-funded programs.
- Losing local dollars that are invested locally will only make a bad funding scenario worse.

If SB 1216/HB 1227 Wins, Children Lose

- SB 1216/HB 1227 would require five of Florida's eight Children's Services Councils to be placed on an August ballot this year for voters to decide the fate of their local CSC.
- Going to ballot in 2010 with less than six months to educate voters is unreasonable.
- Such a short timeframe will **cheat voters** out of the opportunity to make informed decisions about investments in their community's children.
- SB 1216/HB 1227 places Children's Services Councils on a "reauthorization treadmill." It mandates an arbitrary timeline that requires CSCs to go back to the voters every six years for reauthorization.
- While a voting cycle makes sense for an elected official, it wreaks havoc for publicly funded organizations like CSCs that must operate with a long-term vision to best meet the needs of the community.

If SB 1216/HB 1227 Wins, Children Lose - continued

- Repeatedly returning to the ballot diverts resources and energy away from the CSCs' core mission of serving children.
- This legislation jeopardizes sustained investments in children that voters originally intended when creating their local Children's Services Councils.
- Just like any other facet of government, it is difficult to function if your very existence is uncertain.
- With the long-term viability of a CSC always in question, a county's health and human services system remains vulnerable to the politics of the day.

CSCs are Accountable to the People

- Children's Services Councils are accountable to the citizens of their county, their governing boards, their county commissions and the Florida Legislature.
- At any time, a county commission or the Legislature can ask voters to decide if they want to keep their local Council.
- This provides local elected leaders, state lawmakers and voters the highest level of control and authority over Children's Services Councils.
- No other government entity has this many layers of accountability and oversight.
- Everything Children's Services Councils do is in the sunshine – all of their records and meetings are open to the public, including budgets, financial reports and program information.
- The composition of Children's Services Councils board is dictated by Florida law.
- How Children's Services Councils collect, budget and expend funds are also prescribed by statute.
- Children's Services Councils submit quarterly financial reports and independent annual audits to the county. In addition, audits of financial records go to the state each year.
- Recently, the people of Miami-Dade County voted overwhelmingly to keep their Children's Services Council. Voters in Pinellas and Palm Beach Counties returned to the polls and gave their Councils the ability to increase local tax revenues used to fund children's programs.
- Broad community support of Children's Services Councils is a testament to the people's confidence in and satisfaction with their work.

CSCs are a Proven Return on Investment

- Children's Services Councils take local dollars and invest them locally, all with oversight by local leaders.
- While it is difficult to quantify the value of healthy, safe children, the economic value of Children's Service Councils is apparent in their community return on investment -- reduced juvenile crime, better school performance, decreased child abuse and neglect, and reduced infant mortality rates.
- Children's Services Councils leverage the local dollars they receive to secure millions in federal matching money and private donations.
- The programs funded by Children's Services Councils create thousands of local jobs, enabling people to work.