

CAPITOL CONNECTION

Florida Children's Services Council

News from our State and Nation's Capitols about children and families



Week Four

March 26, 2010

CLARIFICATION - House Budget Still Proposes Elimination of Healthy Start Coalitions

The budget chart in Saturday's *Capitol Connection* did not include budget information on the House's proposal to eliminate funding for Healthy Start Coalitions -- a \$4-million cut -- and move the remaining service funds into the County Health Departments. See [Healthy Start talk points](#) for more information.

CALL TO ACTION:

- Contact the **Senate** leadership (Sen. Atwater) and the chair of the Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations (Sen. Peaden) and ask them to **stay firm with maintaining** funding for Healthy Start during conference negotiations.
- Contact **House** leadership (Rep. Cretul), the Chair of the Full Appropriations Council on General Government and Health Care (Rep. Rivera), and the Chair of the Health Care Appropriations Committee (Rep. Grimsley) **to restore funding** for Healthy Start Coalitions during conference negotiations.

Harmful CSC Bill Runs Out of Time, Likely to Resurface

The House Military and Local Affairs Policy Committee was scheduled Thursday to consider CSC bill, [HB 1227](#) by Rep. Debbie Mayfield (R-Indian River). In an unexpected turn of events, the bill was not fully debated and voted on because the committee ran out of time. Now a Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS), the House bill is likely to be considered when the committee meets one last time on April 8 at 1 p.m. Before the committee adjourned, it did adopt two amendments to the PCS. A third amendment was introduced, but did not get voted on due to time. A fourth amendment was filed, but not introduced.

The House PCS now conforms the House bill to the [Committee Substitute](#) for SB 1216, which removes all other requirements except the referendum piece. The first adopted amendment, sponsored by Rep. Juan Zapata (R-Miami-Dade), moves the August primary requirement to

TAKE NOTE

[Children's Week](#)

April 11-14
Tallahassee

Rally for Afterschool

April 20
Washington, DC

[One Goal Summer Conference](#)

July 21-23
Tampa

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a General election. The second adopted amendment, also by Rep. Zapata, changes the schedule for CSCs established in 1990 or before to go to referendum in 2012 (instead of 2010.) The third amendment, by Rep. Mark Pafford (D-Palm Beach), was under discussion when time ran out. Rep. Pafford's amendment sought to change the referendum requirement so that all CSCs, except Miami-Dade, would go to referendum on or before the general election in 2016 (instead of 2010). Miami-Dade would remain at 2018 since they just went to referendum in 2008. A fourth amendment, also by Rep. Pafford but not heard, seeks to replace the referendum provision with a requirement that CSCs undergo a comprehensive statutory review of their operations and functions as prescribed in an existing statute for special districts (s. [189.428](#)).

Several opponents to the bill were in the audience to offer testimony, but did not have the opportunity to speak because of time. Special thanks go to: Jane Murphy, CEO of Hillsborough Healthy Start Coalition, Rayme Nuckles, CEO of the Hillsborough Homeless Coalition, Sarah Obdie, FSU student and former member of the Hillsborough Youth Collaborative, Chris Card, former CEO of Hillsborough Kids, Inc., Kathy Adams, Chair of the Palm Beach ELC and former board chair of the Palm Beach CSC, Commissioner Paula Lewis, St. Lucie Board of County Commissioners, Gordon Tremaine, Alachua County Early Learning Coalition, Evelio Torres, CEO of the Miami-Dade ELC and Board Member of The Children's Trust, and many members of the PTAs from around the state.

CALLS TO ACTION

- Call Reps. Zapata and Pafford and thank them for their support.
- C

ontact members of the [House Military & Local Affairs Committee](#) and urge them to vote NO on PCS/HB 1227.

• Contact members of the [Senate Community Affairs Committee](#) and urge them to vote NO on CS for SB 1216.

At a time when funding for children's programs is being cut to levels that will endanger thousands of children, the possibility of losing locally invested dollars will make the crisis even worse. This unnecessary proposal impinges on local communities and could not come at a worse time for programs that rely on CSC support. [Download additional talk points.](#)

OTHER STATE NEWS

Budget Deliberations Continue

The House and Senate full appropriations committees deliberated their respective budgets this week. A number of changes and amendments were made to improve the lives of children. In Early Childhood, an

amendment offered by Rep. Anitere Flores (R-Miami-Dade) nearly fully funds (1 percent reduction) the VPK program, which was previously positioned for a 15 percent reduction. Her amendment restores \$56 million. This holds ratios and per child payments to providers virtually harmless. In the Senate, \$17 million was restored for 1,728 slots in the subsidized child care program, preventing any disenrollment from the program. However, approximately 84,000 children will remain on the waiting list. In the Senate, funds were restored (some of which came from the enhanced FMAP) for the child welfare system for CBCs, protective investigators. In Health Care, funds were appropriated for KidCare enrollment growth (\$39 million), and to keep CMS, Healthy Start and Early steps whole. The Senate budget banks on more than \$800 million in federal Medicaid money, which is anticipated to come to Florida. In Juvenile Justice, which experienced a 5 percent reduction in General Revenue, intervention and prevention were held harmless for programs such as PACE, CINS/FINS and AMI. In addition, \$4 million was restored for secure and non-secure residential beds.

The House and Senate Appropriations bills [HB 5001](#) and [SB 2700](#), as well as implementing and conforming bills move to the floor next week. Below is an early side-by-side comparison of how the House and Senate budgets compare.

PROPOSED CHANGES (+/-) FROM 2009-10 BUDGET AS OF 3/26/10			
ISSUE	SENATE	HOUSE	COMMENT
School Readiness	- \$3 M	0	Senate cut would result in the inability to draw down \$3.9 million in CCDF matching funds
VPK (Non-admin.)	- \$16.3 M	+ \$35 M	Senate BSA increased from \$2,200 to \$2,390; House provides school year BSA of \$2,549 and summer BSA of \$2168.
Healthy Kids (Kid Care)	+ \$17.6 M	+ \$7.4 M	
Healthy Start	0	- \$4 M	House budget proposes eliminating Healthy Start Coalitions
Healthy Families	0	0	
Early Steps	- \$1.8 M	- \$1.8 M	Uses non-recurring stimulus
Children's Medical Services	+ \$24 M	+ 23.9 M	

Community Based Care (CBC)	- \$14.5 M	- \$29.4 M	
Child Protection Investigation	+ \$158,091	- \$1.4 M	
CINS/FINS	+ \$100,596	+ \$100,869	

NOTE: Additional numbers for Independent Living, Adoption Maintenance Subsidies and JACs are still being verified. We will report on those in the next issue.

CSC Bills Draw Media Response

As voters learn more about proposed legislation (SB 1216 and HB 1227) that could negatively impact the way their Children's Services Councils operate, the media has also taken notice. Below are just a few of the recent editorials and letters to the editor.

- [A Disservice to Children: Legislature Inventing a Problem to Solve](#)
- [Negron's Efforts Political Posturing](#)
- [Revised Negron Bill Has Little to do With Helping Children](#)
- [Elected Officials on Children's Services Council Provide Adequate Representation](#)
- [Children's Services Councils Don't Need Meddling](#)

Early Childhood Caucus Has New Mascot

The founding member of the Florida Early Childhood Caucus, Rep. Ari Porth, celebrated the birth of his first child recently. Gabriel Benjamin weighed in at a healthy 7 lbs., 4 ozs. Florida CSC congratulates the Porth family on their new addition.

EARLY LEARNING

ELC Bills

The Early Learning bill, [SB 2014](#) by Sen. Stephen Wise (R-Duval), which addresses various administrative and governance issues, is currently in Education PreK-12, but may go straight to the floor if the bill gets withdrawn from committees. A similar bill, [HB 1203](#) by Rep. Nelson (R-Orange) and members of the PreK-12 Policy Committee is now in Full Appropriations Council on Education and Economic Development.

STATE & LOCAL REVENUES

TABOR

[SJR 2420](#) by Sen. Mike Haridopolos (R-Brevard), also known as TABOR, passed the Community Affairs committee 5-3 and is headed to Government Oversight & Accountability. The bill proposes an amendment to the state constitution to limit tax revenues and, if passed by the electorate, would require voter approval of new taxes and fees. Acknowledging mounting opposition from city and county governments, Haridopolos amended the bill to remove local governments from the spending cap so it would only apply to state revenues. The bill needs a

three-fifths vote from both the House and Senate to get on this fall's ballot. No House version has been filed.

Property / Annual Assessment / Exemption

[SJR 1254](#) by Mike Fasano (R-Pasco) was passed favorably by Community Affairs and is now in the Finance and Tax Committee. The resolution proposes amendments to the State Constitution to reduce from 10 percent to 5 percent the limitation on annual assessment increases applicable to non-homestead real property, provide an additional homestead exemption for new owners of homestead property and application and limitations with respect thereto. Similar Bill, [HB 655](#) by Carl Domino (R- Palm Beach), passed favorably in Finance and Tax Council 16-1.

CHILD WELFARE

Transition Services for Youth

[SB 1356](#) by Sen. Stephen Wise (R-Duval) passed unanimously in Criminal Justice. The bill permits the Department of Juvenile Justice to provide transition to adulthood services to youth in DJJ's custody or supervision. [HB 627](#) by Rep. Ari Porth (D-Broward) is currently in Full Appropriations Council on Education & Economic Development (no action since 3/9/10).

Background Screenings

[HB 7069](#) by the Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council along with Rep. Snyder (R-Martin) and Rep. Ari Porth (D- Broward) was passed unanimously by the House with 110 yes votes, and is in Senate Messages awaiting approval by the full Senate. The bill prevents individuals from working with children, disabled adults or adults over 65 until they pass a background screening. It also prevents those classified as sexual predators from ever being able to work with vulnerable individuals. This legislation is a significant step toward protecting Floridians from those who would prey on them.

HEALTH CARE

Florida KidCare

[SB 2082](#) by Sen. Nan Rich (D-Broward) has not moved. The bill provides that: children under the age of 1 may participate in the Medikids program; an eligible child who is a lawful immigrant may enroll in the Florida Kidcare Program regardless of the child's date of entry; authorizes Kidcare coverage for temporomandibular joint disease; provides that Medicaid-eligible children are deemed eligible for 12 months of coverage regardless of any change in circumstances, etc. Similar bill, [HB 1545](#) by Juan Zapata (R-Miami), has also not seen action. Although the bills have not moved, funding for enrollment growth is proposed in the budgets.

OTHER ISSUES

Booster Seat Bill

[SB 316](#) by Sen. Thad Altman (R-Brevard) is still in Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations. It would require booster seats, in addition to seat belts, for children aged 4 through 7 and less than 4'9" to protect the child by properly using a crash tested, federally approved child restraint device. It also provides certain exceptions, and redefines the term "motor vehicle" to exclude certain vehicles from such requirements. Sadly, the House bill (HB 387) still has not been heard in the Roads, Bridges and Ports Committee, and House committees are coming to an end.

CALL TO ACTION: Please call Reps. Dave Murzin and Dean Cannon to urge them to place [HB 387](#) on the committee calendar so it can move forward in the House.

High School Students Present Smoking Bill

Students from three different Hillsborough County high schools presented [HB 1141](#) by Rep. Kevin Ambler (R-Hillsborough), Smoking in Vehicles with Minor Passengers, in a workshop in the Roads, Bridges & Ports Policy Committee on Thursday. The group presented the bill as part of Rep. Ambler's "Ought to be a Law" (OTBAL) Student Legislation Program.

Bills Propose Changes in State Employee Retirement Plan

Legislation ([CS/SB 2022](#)) by Sen. JD Alexander would require public employees to pay one-quarter of one percent of their gross pay into the Florida Retirement System starting Jan. 1, 2011. This would help to offset a potential \$15-billion shortfall in the fund, its first deficit in a dozen years.

On the House side, the House has introduced [HB 5701](#), which eliminates the retiree health insurance subsidy, which equals \$5 per month for every year of service up to a maximum of \$150 a month. These bills are part of the overall budgets that the House and Senate will each consider on the floor next week and then begin conferencing. The House and Senate are likely to reach agreement on changes related to FRS as part of the budget conference process.

FEDERAL NEWS

Healthcare Reform

On Tuesday, President Obama signed legislation into law that will reform the country's health care insurance practices. Arguably one of the most significant pieces of legislation in a generation, this health care bill will have a major impact across the country. At-risk young children and families will benefit from a new home visiting provision within the health care legislation. Home visiting will be funded at \$1.5 billion over five years. States will be able to establish and expand high-quality, evidence-based, voluntary home visiting services to expectant families and those with young children. All states will receive funds, if they so choose, through a formula process. The legislation calls for funds to be used to serve high-need areas, offer training and technical assistance, and promote coordination and collaboration.

While the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA) was included in the budget reconciliation bill with health care reform, the unfortunate news from Washington, D.C. is that the Early Learning Challenge Fund provision within SAFRA was removed. Shortly after the fund was eliminated, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said, "The president is absolutely committed on this issue, I'm absolutely committed, and we're going to find another vehicle to help the early learning community."

~ Excerpted from Ounce of Prevention Fund newsletter
