

CAPITOL CONNECTION

Florida Children's Services Council

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



Week Seven

April 16, 2010

Harmful CSC Bill Passes Third Senate Committee

Despite outstanding testimony from CSC supporters who spoke about the damaging effects of [CS/SB 1216](#) by Sen. Joe Negron, the Senate Committee on Finance and Tax passed the CSC bill on a 3-2 vote, along party lines. Sens. Charlie Justice (D-PInellas) and Jeremy Ring (D-Broward) were the two "no" votes.

Florida CSC CEO Vivian Alarcon testified that the bill's requirement for automatic referendum every six years would force CSCs into the campaign business rather than focusing on what voters originally intended - to make children the priority over politics. She pointed out that current CSC law already provides a safety valve for counties that believe their CSC needs reconsideration. However, in more than 60 years, no community has ever felt it necessary to use this option because of the very strong track record of the councils.

Kirk Brown of HANDY, Inc., in Broward County, asked committee members to consider that private campaign fundraising by CSCs would become routine and would siphon philanthropic dollars for political purposes rather than being given to his agency or others to serve children.

Amy Simpson, Executive Director of Boys Town South Florida, spoke to the importance of stable funding sources. She said that even non-profit agencies make capital and personnel decisions to support high-quality systems based on stable financial potential. In the case of her program, which employs 70 people, Boys Town made a location decision influenced greatly by the presence of the CSC of Palm Beach County because of its stable presence in the community and its commitment to strategic investments and systems building.

Despite the presentations, the bill passed with no debate. CS/SB 1216 was later placed on the agenda in its final Senate committee, Health and Human Services Appropriations, which is scheduled to meet April 19 at 10:30 a.m. Even though the House version (PCB/HB 1227) died in committee last week, the Senate sponsor has vowed to get his bill passed this session. CSC supporters should remain on high alert, and continue reaching out to local legislators and leadership to educate them

TAKE NOTE

Rally for Afterschool

April 20
Washington, DC

[One Goal Summer Conference](#)

July 21-23
Tampa

Early Learning Listening Tours

Over the next two months, the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS) will hold a series of Listening and Learning About Early Learning meetings with one stop in Orlando on May 4, which will focus on family engagement. The meetings will focus on topics related to early learning (birth through 3rd Grade): Understanding Preschool - Grade 3 Structures, Workforce and Professional Development, Family Engagement, and Standards and Assessments. The meetings will be led by

on the harmful effects of this bad bill.

Special Thanks

Thanks to the CSC supporters who attended Tuesday's hearing to voice their opposition to the bill. The list includes: Members of The Children's Trust Youth Advisory Committee; Amy Simpson, Executive Director, Boys Town South Florida; Kirk Brown, Director of Programs, HANDY; Brandon Wagner, Hillsborough County Lobbyist; and Karen Woodall, Coordinator, Coalition for Fair and Comprehensive Tax Reform. Also, a huge thank you goes to the many advocates and members of local communities who continue to demonstrate their support for CSCs and Florida's children.

IMMEDIATE CALL TO ACTION: Contact members of the [Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee](#) and ask them to vote "no" on CS/SB 1216 on Monday. Also, contact House Speaker Larry Cretul and Senate President Jeff Atwater and urge them to put a stop to this bill that jeopardizes long-term, strategic investments in Florida's children, especially when the state is already struggling to fund programs for children.

Budget Negotiations Delayed

Official negotiations on the state budget did not begin this week as expected. The legislature found itself highly distracted by the Teacher Merit Pay bill (SB 6), Medicaid Reform, and the Gaming Compact. Additionally, the disappointing reality is setting in that Congress will not act quickly enough for the Florida Senate to advance it's version of the budget that relies on \$800 million in new federal dollars for Medicaid. The House budget does not use FMAP dollars. Absent FMAP dollars, the current proposed budgets for health and human service programs are likely to change. Advocates are urged to keep a watchful eye on key programs over the next two weeks. Of particular interest are Healthy Families and VPK. The Senate's entire budget for Healthy Families uses FMAP dollars (\$27.4 million). For VPK, the Senate used more than \$19 million in FMAP. Even with FMAP money, the Senate budget represents a nearly 10 percent cut to VPK. House and Senate leaders announced today that an organizational budget conference will be held Saturday morning at 10 a.m. to be followed by the first meetings of individual conference committees over the weekend. Highlighted below are some of the priority budget items Florida CSC continues to monitor.

- > [See House Budget Conference Information](#)
- > [See Senate Budget Conference Information](#)

PROPOSED CHANGES (+/-) COMPARED TO 2009-10 BUDGET AS OF 4/2/10			
ISSUE	HOUSE	SENATE	COMMENT
VPK (Non-admin.)	+ \$35.5	+ \$2.8 M	Despite increase over

Secretary Duncan's senior advisor on early learning, Jacqueline Jones, and HHS's Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development at the Administration for Children and Families, Joan Lombardi. The meetings will help inform the work of ED and HHS around early learning. [Learn more.](#)

Capitol Connection is also available online at the FCSC [web site](#).

	M		last year, the Senate budget represents a nearly 10% cut in VPK. The House has a 1% cut. Click here for details.
Healthy Start Coalitions	- \$4 M	\$0	House proposes eliminating Healthy Start Coalitions and transferring service dollars to County Health Departments. See Call to Action below.
Independent Living	\$0	\$0	Legislative staff say base budget is covered. House conforming bill cuts monthly stipend to \$675, nearly half of what it was.
Maintenance Adoption Subsidies	- \$1.8 M	- \$920 K	
Juvenile Assessment Centers	- \$1 M	\$ 0	Learn more about JACs

CALLS TO ACTION: Contact main budget chairs, Sen. JD Alexander and Rep. David Rivera on all of these issues.

VPK - Contact members of the [Senate Education PreK-12 Appropriations Committee](#) and urge them to take the House position on VPK. Also contact Budget Conferees for Pre-K-12/Education Pre-K -12.
Budget Conference - Pre-K-12/Education Pre-K - 12
House Members: Flores (Chair); Bullard, D., Clarke-Reed, Coley, Fresen, Kiar, Legg, Stargel
Senate Members: Wise (Chair); Bullard, Detert, Garcia, Richter, Siplin

Healthy Start --Contact House leadership (Speaker Cretul), Full Appropriations Chair Rep. Rivera, and the Chair of the Health Care Appropriations Committee (Rep. Grimsley) **to restore funding** for Healthy Start Coalitions during conference negotiations. Also contact Budget Conferees for Health Care/Health and Human Services.
Budget Conference - Health Care/Health & Human Services
House Members: Grimsley (Chair); Chestnut, Ford, Frishe, Hudson, Roberson, Y., Skidmore, Thompson, N.
Senate Members: Peaden (Chair); Gaetz, Haridopolos, Negron, Rich, Sobel

Independent Living - Urge Reps. Rivera and Grimsley to restore funding for the monthly stipend. Also contact Budget Conferees for Health Care/Health and Human Services.

Budget Conference - Health Care/Health & Human Services

House Members: Grimsley (Chair); Chestnut, Ford, Frishe, Hudson, Roberson, Y., Skidmore, Thompson, N.

Senate Members: Peaden (Chair); Gaetz, Haridopolos, Negron, Rich, Sobel

JACs - Contact House members and urge them to restore \$1 million in JAC funding. Also contact Budget Conferees for Criminal & Civil Justice.

Budget Conference - Criminal & Civil Justice/Criminal & Civil Justice

House Members: Adams (Chair); Eisnaugle, Holder, Kreegel, Porth, Rouson, Soto, Tobia

Senate Members: Crist (Chair); Jones, Joyner, Villalobos, Wilson

OTHER STATE NEWS

Children's Week Provides Inspiration in Tough Session

Week seven of the legislative session provided a big boost to weary child advocates as they were joined in the work by hundreds of children, teachers, parents and others during Children's Week. From the "Hanging of the Hands" on Sunday, to the recognition of innovative community programs that included two supported by their CSC, to the Kids Only Town Hall meeting with the Children's Cabinet, the event brought energy and purpose to the Capitol during a critical time in the process.

The Kids Only Town Hall on Tuesday featured a panel of youth who addressed and questioned members of the Governor's Children & Youth Cabinet. As has become the custom, the youngsters were well prepared and undaunted in questioning the high ranking officials about Florida's flagging commitment to children as reflected in the state's budget and policy.

Children from all over Florida also walked the halls and met with legislators about their concerns. A particularly effective young advocate, Michelle Ruiz representing The Children's Trust Youth Advisory Committee, passionately pleaded with Governor Crist to veto SB 6 (Teacher Merit Pay). The 17-year-old student, who helped to organize the "sickout" by Miami-Dade teachers and students on Monday, spoke to the Governor for a full five minutes and urged him to veto the teacher pay and tenure bill. Gov. Crist vetoed the controversial education reform measure on Thursday.





Shaquille Gayle (left) and JaQuan Smith (right) worked at the Capitol this week as legislative pages for Rep. Ari Porth.

Two other young advocates involved with the Broward CSC were in town this week to meet with legislators, but also to work as legislative pages for Rep. Ari Porth - JaQuan Smith and Shaquille Gayle. During their week-long visit, Smith and Gayle made a stop at the Florida CSC office where they shared their aspirations for the future. Smith was so inspired by his time in the capitol city that he wrote an essay that he shared with the group. [Read](#)

[Smith's essay here.](#)

Congratulations to Dick Batchelor, recipient of the 2010 Chiles Advocacy Award, who was recognized at the annual advocacy dinner on Monday. The Chiles Advocacy Award, in honor of Lawton and Rhea Chiles' dedication to Florida's children and families, is presented annually to a Floridian who has dedicated his or her life to improving the lives of children by successfully promoting policies and programs that benefit those children and families.

And, a final note of "job well done" to Jason Zaborske, President of Capital Events, Inc., Ted Granger of the United Way of Florida, and the hundreds of volunteers who created a fabulous platform to showcase the state's most precious resource, it's children.

CSCs Recognized in Inaugural Community Innovation Awards Event

On Monday, Children's Week organizers hosted the inaugural Community Innovation Awards together with the Lawton Chiles Foundation. The Awards recognize communities that are pursuing systemic change by collaboratively endeavoring to mesh programs and funding to address critical issues facing children and families. Awards were presented to four local programs, including two that are supported by their CSC - Quality Counts in Palm Beach County and Kinship Service Network in Pinellas County. The other two programs recognized were Healthy Jacksonville Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition in Duval County and the Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children Teen Xpress Program in Orange County.

Quality Counts, a quality rating improvement system, is a voluntary early care and education system that enhances child care so children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. More than 150 programs serving upwards of 12,000 county children participate in Quality Counts. Kinship Service Network provides a coordinated network of services for relative caregiver families to achieve self-sufficiency and stability. The network comprises 33 social service organizations, government agencies, funders and local businesses to create a family-driven,

community-based system of support for relative caregivers.
Congratulations to CSC of Palm Beach and JWB-CSC of Pinellas.

Medicaid Reform

This week, the full House of Representatives passed two bills that bring about a sweeping overhaul of Florida's Medicaid program. The bills, [HB 7223](#) and [HB 7225](#), divide the state into six regions and move all Medicaid recipients into managed care entities (health maintenance organizations and provider service networks) by 2015. Children's Medical Services will be held harmless. In addition, members debating the bill on the floor yesterday indicated the Florida KidCare program will not see significant changes under the plan. Citizens eligible for the Medically Needy program will all be required to receive care administered by a managed care entity. The House plan begins the transition to statewide managed care this summer by expanding the existing reform pilot structure in Broward and Duval counties into Miami-Dade.

The Senate version of Medicaid Reform, [CS/CS/SB 1484](#), passed the full Senate before Passover break. The Senate bill expands the existing reform pilot to 19 additional counties with two or more managed care companies and the capacity to care for eligible Medicaid patients. Additional language was included in the Senate appropriations bill to authorize Medicaid recipients to use vouchers to buy private insurance.

Although many advocates feel the House proposal, which contains some good provisions for provider service networks and medical homes is preferable to a wholesale managed care model, some child advocates continue to express concerns over certain populations such as pregnant women, chronically ill children and those in the child welfare system.

At this time, it is unclear whether a conference committee will be convened to deliberate on Medicaid reform legislation. Florida CSC policy consultants believe that the house bill's statewide managed care regional approach may be appealing to the Senate, and, as such, the two chambers may work from the House bill and chamber amendatory process.

Collier County Commission Endorses Local CSC Bill

Collier County commissioners on Tuesday voted 3-2 to send a letter to state legislators supporting a local bill ([SB 1162](#)) that would pave the way to create a children's service trust in Collier County. The bill would create a mechanism for Collier County voters to create a trust through an independent taxing district. The trust would be similar to the children's services council allowed by Florida law and, if created, would bring millions of dollars annually to children's services in Collier County. [Read full article online.](#)

EARLY LEARNING

ELC Bill Headed to Senate Floor

The Early Learning Bill ([SB 2014 C2](#)), as amended, by Sen. Stephen Wise (R-Duval) includes provisions to clean up obsolete statute

references, clarify state-level authority, increase collaboration across state agencies, and ensure flexibility to meet federal requirements. The bill has been placed on the calendar on second reading. The House companion ([HB 1203](#)) by Rep. Bryan Nelson (R-Orange) has passed through one committee stop favorably.

STATE & LOCAL REVENUES

TABOR Bill

[SJR 2420](#) by Sen. Mike Haridopolos (R-Brevard), also known as TABOR, remains in the Finance & Tax committee. 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. The bill no longer includes local governments under the spending cap, so it would apply only to state revenues. The bill needs a three-fifths vote from both the House and Senate to get on this fall's ballot.

Assessment Limits for Non-Homestead Property, Additional Exemptions for New Homeowners

[SJR 1254](#) by Mike Fasano (R-Pasco) has not moved since late March. 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), is in the Rules and Calendar Council.

CHILD WELFARE

Transition Services for Youth

[SB 1356](#) by Sen. Stephen Wise (R-Duval) was placed on the calendar on second reading in the Senate. The bill permits the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to provide transition to adulthood services to youth in DJJ's custody or supervision. DJJ has signaled its willingness to accept what has been referred to as the "Adams Amendment," which would give a judge the authority to commit a child to the Department of Juvenile Justice, but also determine the restrictiveness level, thereby impacting the child's placement. Critics warn that this provision opens the door down the road for providers to directly and indirectly lobby judges in an attempt to increase placements in their programs.

Background Screenings

[HB 7069](#) by the Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council along with Rep. Snyder (R-Martin) and Rep. Ari Porth (D- Broward) is still in Senate messages. 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.

Concurrent Custody

[SB 334](#) by Sen. Ronda Storms (R-Hillsborough) was placed on calendar

for second reading. Companion bill, [HB 25](#) by Rep. Rich Glorioso (R-Hillsborough), has been placed on Special Order Calendar for April 19.

CALL TO ACTION: Please urge passage of these bills, which provide a legal remedy for extended family caregivers to obtain needed services for children in their care.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Juvenile Justice Blueprint Bill

[CS/SB 1072](#) by Sen. Stephen Wise (R-Duval) has been placed on the calendar for second reading. A similar bill in the House, [HB 7181](#) by Rep. Kevin Ambler (R-Hillsborough), has also been placed on the calendar for second reading. The bill makes a number of changes to juvenile justice laws in an effort to enhance services for youth in the Juvenile Justice system. The bill encourages the diversion of youth nine years of age or younger who are found by a court to pose no danger to the community and are unlikely to recidivate back into supervision; expands the definition of "child in need of services" and "family in need to services" to allow those youth to be served by the CINS/FINS network; promotes the use of restorative justice practices to support victims of juvenile delinquency; adds counties, municipalities, and the Department of Juvenile Justice to the specified entities that are encouraged to create pre-arrest or post-arrest diversion programs for youth nine years of age or younger and youth who are first time misdemeanants; prohibits a youth nine years of age or younger from being placed in secure detention unless the youth has been charged with a capital felony, a life felony, or a felony of the first degree; and requires the DJJ to create the Disproportionate Minority Contact Task Force as a way to address minority over-representation in the Juvenile Justice system.

OTHER ISSUES

Booster Seat Bill

[SB 316](#) by Sen. Thad Altman (R-Brevard) was read a second time by the full Senate. 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) has not moved.

CALL TO ACTION: With the Senate bill progressing, the holdup is in the House. Contact Speaker Cretul and Reps. Cannon and Murzin to encourage them to take up the Senate bill.

Bill to Create Collier County CSC Passes House Committee

[HB 511](#) by Rep. Matt Hudson (R-Collier) passed unanimously through the Economic Development & Community Affairs Policy Council today, its last committee. The bill provides a charter to create an independent special district to provide children's services in Collier County. The

Senate companion, SB 1162, has not been heard in committee.