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Children's Board of Hillsborough County

## **Children's Board Votes to Fund Two County Programs Hit by Cuts**

**TAMPA, FL** - The Children's Board of Hillsborough County voted unanimously on Thursday, Aug. 20 to approve funding to help address two areas slated by the county for reduction or elimination: child care licensing and after-school programs. The Board vote followed a request on June 25 by Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners for the Children's Board to provide the county \$1.9 million to maintain the two programs for fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

Currently there are 1,301 child care providers in Hillsborough County, serving more than 3,100 children daily with an overall enrollment of up to 5,000. Proposed cuts to Hillsborough County's Park and Recreation sites could have left an estimated 2,800 families scrambling for supervised out-of-school time care for their children if additional resources weren't found.

The plan approved by the Children's Board creates community collaboration to sustain the local child care licensing effort. It includes recommendations to reduce operating costs, rely on the Children's Board, Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County and Department of Children and Families for additional support, and increase licensing fees paid by child care providers.

Budgets of both the child care licensing program and the after-school program, also known as out-of-school time care, also will rely on the Early Learning Coalition's ability to draw down federal matching funds as part of a revenue maximization strategy. The Children's Board will provide \$250,000 in ongoing funds to support both programs in fiscal year 2010, and will provide \$555,000 in one-time funds in fiscal year 2010 to support out-of-school time care until the revenue maximization strategy can be fully implemented beginning July 1, 2010.

"This was a great partnership and collaborative effort among the Early Learning Coalition, the County and the Children's Board," said Board CEO Luanne Panacek. "It fits perfectly with our focus to unite, invest and lead."

Manus O'Donnell, administrator for human services with Hillsborough County, said, "We're pleased with this collaboration. This partnership will enable us to continue high quality services to serve the children and the child care providers. The Children's Board and Early Learning Coalition funds will enable us to double the funding by getting a match from state and federal resources."

"I'm excited that in this time of lean budgets that the Children's Board is collaboratively working to address issues in the community," said Mark Sharpe, the Hillsborough County Commission's representative on the Children's Board. "The County's top priority is making sure that it is working with all the agencies that provide after-school care for our children. We know that parents, especially single moms, and the Children's Board understand their value."

David McGerald, CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County, said he was pleased with how things worked out. "When I addressed the Commissioners on this issue at the first public hearing I requested they sit down with the Early Learning Coalition and the Children's Board to find a solution. At that point the Coalition already had a strategy developed but the partnership was the critical missing piece. Now, I'm thrilled we have that partnership and I believe this could be a model for other communities across the State. This is a big win for the children and families in our community."

"This partnership has resulted in the one of the most innovative outcomes I've ever seen," said Children's Board member Susan Schneider.

Hillsborough County Public Schools Superintendent and Children's Board member Mary Ellen Elia said, "This is major when you've got lots of partners coming together to provide a solution. This is a great way to leverage resources to get more money and better fund these programs."

*The Children's Board serves as the leading voice and advocate for children and families in our community. The board is the only organization of its kind in Hillsborough County that generates revenue to help children and families. The Children's Board is recognized nationally for its contributions to best practices in policies and programs aiding children and families. Citizens may visit [www.childrensboard.org](http://www.childrensboard.org) to learn more about the board's programs.*