

Dear Mayor Cieslewicz,

I'm writing on behalf of the Early Childhood Care and Education Board to urge you strongly to maintain full funding for the agencies we support through the Community Resources Program contracts and to maintain the current funding level for the Child Care Assistance Program tuition assistance grants. As we have discussed in the past, these and other community services programs are public safety services that deserve the same level of budget protection as police and fire services. After school programs, quality child care, and preservation of child care infrastructure serve the public safety by ensuring that small problems do not become bigger problems requiring police or other interventions.

Our hearing on the proposed budget for Program Area I of the Community Resources Program was full of compelling testimony about the value of the services offered by such agencies as the Bridge Lakepoint Waunona Community Center, the Rainbow Project, the Wexford Ridge Community Center, and all the other agencies we support. It was clear that the agencies didn't just make people's lives better, although by itself that is worthy of the City's support. *The work of the Community Resources Program-funded agencies in fact precludes the need for more expensive, more intrusive City services, especially police services.* And they do this work for less than 1.5 percent of the total City budget!

Yes, the City of Madison is facing a perilous economic climate, but so are many of the City's citizens. Difficult economic times are exactly the wrong time to weaken the net of programs supporting the most needful of our residents, our low income children and families. The agencies are straining to meet the needs of the people coming to their doors. Let us not make their jobs even more difficult by reducing their City funding.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Joanne Brown, Chair  
Early Childhood Care and Education Board