

1/6/10

Dear Community Services Commission,

The Early Care and Education Committee would like to thank you for your diligence and dedication in completing the process of determining funding ranges for the services funded through the City of Madison and Office of Community Services. We recognize the challenge of assigning dollar amounts to the different priority areas. As a committee we have struggled with many of these same issues and recognize the time and energy that goes into reaching funding decisions.

The Early Care and Education Committee would like to draw your attention to some of our concerns about the proposed program area allocations. First, we recognize that the nominal group process used by the funding subcommittee may have been useful in reaching consensus on the importance of program areas, but want to point out that this process is a tool and should not take precedence over the needs of the community. It is also critical that the cost of services be factored into the funding allocation determination. We have no argument with a finding that all the program areas are equally important to the City of Madison, but that does not lead to the conclusion that all areas should be funded equally. The allocations must recognize the individual nature of services provided under the different priority areas. Providing high quality child care programming will cost more per "unit" provided than will after school programming for middle schoolers, because of the nature of the program. Both are necessary and important, but one costs more than the other and should have more funds available.

The Early Care and Education Committee is also concerned about how the decision making process will be structured for the next funding cycle. Just like the Community Services Committee, we deal with uncertainty. We have to make decisions specific to agencies before we know the actual budget. We may also have to suggest potential cuts to programs that are already chronically underfunded. Adding the uncertainty of the funding ranges may have significant impact on agencies working to support the children and families in our community. The Early Childhood Care and Education Committee is concerned that funding may reach a point that does not support programs in being able to do their work. We ask that allocation levels must be clear and reflective of the actual cost of doing business in each priority area.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and for your continued work for the children and families in our community.

Sincerely,

The Early Care and Education Committee