



Board of Directors Meeting

November 14, 2013

Florida Children's Council

Item IV.B.

Recommended Action: Discussion

Strategic Plan

Key Result Area: Collaboration and Partnerships for Community Impact

Florida Children's Council representatives, Brittany Birken, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer and Sean Boyle, Executive Director of the Children's Services Council of St. Lucie County and Chair of the Florida Children's Council, presented to the Finance Committee on October 24, 2013. They asked JWB to consider rejoining the statewide organization. Documentation was sent to all Board members prior to the Finance Committee meeting.

Dr. Birken supplied the attached letter in response to Finance Committee members asking the Florida Children's Council to give specific details regarding the value added for JWB to become a member.

The Finance Committee Chair has referred the question to re-join the Florida Children's Council to the full Board. The membership dues for FY 2013-2014 are \$63,312.

Background:

At the September 16, 2010 JWB Board meeting, the Board voted to reduce JWB's FY 2010-2011 dues to the Florida Children's Services Council (FCSC) from \$75,000 to \$55,000. For FY 2011-2012, during the transition of the SAMIS data system, membership dues in the amount of \$55,000 were paid. In FY 2012-2013, JWB did not continue its membership in the organization.

Since that time, the organization has undergone a restructuring including a name change to the Florida Children's Council and revising the dues structure. The Executive Directors and Chairs of the seven Children's Services Councils continue to serve as Board Members of the Florida Children's Council. The staff was reduced from three (3) FTE to two (2) FTE. The council sublets office space from the Ounce of Prevention Florida. The organization now provides both public policy and trade association deliverables designed to meet the diverse needs of the membership.

In July of 2013, Dr. Birken and Mr. Boyle met with then-JWB Chair Elise Minkoff and the JWB Executive Management team. It was determined that the Finance Committee was the preferred audience to address the issue.

Staff Resource: Debra A. Prewitt



Florida children's council
Making a lasting impression

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The Honorable Bernie McCabe
Chair Executive Finance Committee
The Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County
14155 58th Street North
Clearwater, FL 33760

Dear Chair McCabe:

I am writing you with follow up from our meeting on October 24, 2013. Thank you for providing time on your agenda for discussion related to membership with the Florida Children's Council.

As requested, this letter outlines the benefits of membership to the association. While the mission of the Florida Children's Council is very specific, the work associated with the mission is expansive. For this reason, it was very challenging to make this letter concise, but I do hope that you and members of the board find it informative.

I would like to start by sharing that as someone who has dedicated my career to bettering the lives of children in our great state, I know of no more worthy work than what is accomplished by the Children's Services Councils. The dedication of each community is commendable—particularly that of board members and staff—and it is an honor to work in support of this effort.

Much of the discussion during the October 24th meeting is the very reason the work of the state association is so important. Having served as a director in state government for many years I understand well that policy decisions at the state level can neglect the impact on local communities. I had the great privilege of working with many community leaders and volunteers like yourself during my tenure in government and know well that it is vital to our collective success that your experiences, expertise and perspectives are accounted for in all efforts. My top priority is to represent all CSCs exceptionally—both to demonstrate strength in unity and mission and to showcase how unique and special each CSC truly is.

The following information is being provided to add context to our presentation. This is an important time in Florida's history for CSCs and we are dedicated to supporting the critical work done locally in each of our member communities.

FLORIDA CHILDREN'S COUNCIL

Experience that Counts

The Council's mission is to promote policies that build prevention and early intervention systems of supports for children and families by enhancing the collective strengths of the individual and unique CSCs. Since the summer of 2011, I have served as the CEO of the Florida Children's Council. To accomplish this mission, I do not work alone. Along with my colleague, Dr. Stacy Howard, we have more than **30 years combined experience** in the area of child and family sciences. We both have experience in academia, non-profits and state government. We have expertise in policy and system development and we are experts in child and family development. We also hold two in-house contracts with **prestigious, award winning organizations** that strengthen our work. We contract with Ballard Partners, Florida's number 1 ranked lobbying firm and CoreMessage, Inc., recipients of several local and state awards from the Florida Public Relations Association and home to one of only 80 Certified Public Relations Counselors in Florida. We work as a dedicated team committed to the collective vision of the CSCs and to their good work locally.

Connections and Influence

Currently, we serve on and work in partnership with more than **35 statewide boards, organizations and state agencies**. These range from long-term relationships maintained over several years, to newly forged relationships intended to expand the Council's outreach and awareness efforts. Having more than 35 working partnerships has its advantages when it comes to accessing certain information with accuracy and speed - both of which can be critical to time sensitive issues. Furthermore, the Council's influential reputation goes a long way in telling the great story of CSCs and the inherent value they add - not only locally to hundreds of thousands of children and youth each year, but as a state model of effective systems of care. Member organizations have full access to the people, information and resources we have available.

Worthy Investment

For the nominal investment of **.013 percent** of total ad valorem budget revenue, each CSC contributes to an association budget of approximately \$450,000 annually. Within this modest budget, we deliver on three major fronts - referendum, state-level policy advancement and trade association.

REFERENDUM

One year from now, referendum will be upon two of our member CSCs. More than any other time before - we must stand united to ensure the long-term success of all CSCs statewide. While local CSCs do not fund efforts associated with referendum directly, it is critical to the success of all CSC communities to have the support of peer organizations and benefit from lessons learned, and to assist each member CSC in being thoughtful, strategic and organized.

Navigating a Complicated Path

Given how connected Florida's media markets are and how bad news seems to travel more quickly - it is imperative that each referendum brings success. Otherwise, those CSCs scheduled for future referendum will have added obstacles in the form of slanted press that could negatively influence voters and fuel local media markets. The very nature of referendum is complicated, but with a collected front, navigating the political complexities becomes less burdensome. For this very purpose, we contract with CoreMessage, Inc. to provide an extra layer of coverage for member CSCs on issues relating to media, outreach, messaging, public relations, and product development. CoreMessage provides assistance and insights on state messaging that can be used locally, and if need arises will provide support for crisis

management. By having an outside perspective on sensitive issues, member CSCs have the opportunity to gain counsel from CoreMessage, Inc. experts in order to more effectively weigh the best options for next steps.

Increasing Support

We support CSCs every day by broadcasting positive messages statewide through our recently launched social media campaign. Designed and maintained by CoreMessage, Inc., they apply their expertise to our social media campaign through our website, Facebook account and Twitter feeds. We know from statistics that the community members who utilize social media are the very demographics likely to turn out for vote when the time comes. Therefore, connecting the messages of both the Council and of local CSCs is another step toward expanding awareness and support for the work of CSCs. CoreMessage also provides access to AP news and articles and provides opportunities for a larger voice—both statewide and locally. They have assisted with placements of op eds and influence media attention on priorities of the Council to ensure greater coverage and positive media exposure.

Face to Face Planning

To further our assistance in referendum, we provide member organizations time to meet face to face to discuss the challenges and successes of current referendum planning. Member CSCs come together four times a year and fully utilize the opportunity to have candid conversations about local plans and strategies for successful referendum. These discussions include sharing political know how, sharing fund raising strategies, discussing outreach and awareness lessons learned, creative fundraising strategies, and hearing from experts on several areas related to leading a successful referendum campaign.

Insightful Data

Another added benefit of being connected through an association is open access to aggregated data from each CSC when needed. At times, it is important to respond to media inquiries with more global information involving other CSCs in order to build a case for why the local CSC operates the way it does. In other instances, gaining knowledge about how other CSCs operate can improve the internal operations of another CSC. We are constantly involved in providing technical assistance to member organizations by polling fellow members on subjects such as organizational charts, personnel evaluation processes, contractor requirements, RFP advances, and other areas that directly impact the operational success of CSCs.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

With nearly 50% of all children younger than 5 living in a county with a CSC - decisions made in Tallahassee directly impact each CSC community's ability and/or inability to make decisions in the best interest of their residents. Unfortunately, we know, at times, decisions made in Tallahassee are done so in a vacuum without full consideration of the direct and indirect consequences to local communities. At the Council, we take this reality very seriously and we work tirelessly to ensure that local voices are not only heard, but become influential in discussions ranging from special taxing district issues to issues impacting child well-being. We represent the local voice for 105 days a year during legislative committee weeks and legislative session. Being located in Tallahassee positions us to be present, engaged and intricately connected to the legislative process full-time and year-round.

Access to Ballard Partners

Regardless of the issue at hand, if the going gets rough, the Council has full access to Brian Ballard, President of Ballard Partners. Throughout the year, we work with a Ballard Partners lobbyist assigned to our issues full-time who not only understands our issues, but is knowledgeable about the work of

CSCs both collectively and individually. Working alongside a well-respected lobbyist firm has proven invaluable in the legislative process.

Membership on the Firm

In addition to the Council, each member CSC has a selected staff member with policy expertise assigned as a full member of the Firm. Created a number of years ago, the Firm's role is to be the ears and eyes of the collective CSCs to monitor the activities of committees, track bills, and work with members to protect the interests of CSCs. The Firm provides valuable legislative connection and influence with years of experience among members. In order to move policy forward, key leadership must be informed and engaged - the Firm, in partnership with Council staff, ensures this on behalf of all CSCs. We hold an annual Firm retreat where members utilize time away to strategically build the upcoming year's policy agenda that is vetted and approved by our membership.

Influential Policy Agenda

Our collective policy agenda includes priority issues in four major categories that represent the full scope of all CSC priorities: Adequately Fund and Improve Early Childhood/Afterschool Programs, Healthy Children, Supports for Children and Families, and Youth Services. We work diligently to move priorities forward throughout the year.

Capitol Connection Newsletter

During legislative session, members of the Firm and Council co-author the Capitol Connection Newsletter highlighting weekly movement and decision-making on all tracked bills and legislation. The newsletter is issued to more than 650 interested persons on our distribution list and is further distributed by our member organizations across their communities. Our newsletter is among a select few premiere publications that include weekly updates on a broad array of issues impacting children, youth and families.

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet

Not only do we work with legislation drafted by others, we too, work to draft legislation. Connected to a project we have co-led with Cabinet member and Executive Director of Guardian ad Litem, Alan Abramowitz, we plan to draft and pass legislation during the 2015 year. The legislation will grant local communities waivers from restricting federal/state regulations and requirements. Today, interested CSCs have been chosen as pilot communities. This is a huge opportunity not only to spot light current best practices of CSCs, but to uphold CSCs as state-level models for maximizing resources, minimizing duplication and increasing efficiencies in systems supporting children and youth. There is great potential in this project and many opportunities to showcase the incredible achievements of member organizations to a state-level audience.

2013 Successes

During the 2013 legislative session, our legislative involvement resulted in several wins for programs that have unfortunately experienced reductions in budgets over the past many years. We know that every penny in programs serving the state's most vulnerable matters and securing adequate funding remains a top priority for us each year. This year we celebrated increased funding in several critical programs including:

- \$5.1 million in funding for the School Readiness program for the first time in more than a decade serving an additional 1,500 vulnerable children.
- \$3 million in funding for the Early Steps program.
- 7,000 more children served in the Florida KidCare program.
- \$3 million in funding for the Florida Healthy Families program.

- Increases for adolescent mental health and substance abuse, community-based care, and juvenile justice prevention programs.

We also worked arm in arm with the Florida Afterschool Network to retain school-age as eligibility criterion to receive School Readiness services. There was a movement to eliminate school-age services and only serve children ages birth to five. Along with partner organizations, our message of the importance of school-age care prevailed. Given most families have more than one child, school-age care becomes critical to the continuum of services needed to ensure all siblings have access to the quality care needed while family members work. This win for families is a great example of how we leverage our partnerships to advocate for policies that benefit all families.

Established Rapport with the Governor’s Office, Senate and House

We have worked hard to establish relationships with individual members of the Senate, House and the Governor’s Office including key staffers, often times the gatekeepers to decisions. Along with Firm, we actively follow and participate in every legislative committee that has impact on child and youth well-being.

Senate and House Committees: Comprehensive coverage by the Florida Children’s Council

| Senate | House |
|--|--|
| Appropriations | Appropriations |
| Appropriations Subcommittee: Education, Finance & Tax, General Government, and Health & Human Services | Appropriations Subcommittee: Education, Finance & Tax, Government Operations, Health Care, Justice, and Economic Affairs |
| Children, Families & Elder Affairs | Education |
| Community Affairs | Choice & Innovation |
| Criminal Justice | K-12 |
| Education | Health & Human Services |
| Ethics & Elections | Healthy Quality |
| Governmental Oversight & Accountability | Healthy Families |
| Health Policy | Criminal Justice |
| | Local & Federal Affairs |
| | Ethics & Elections |
| | Government Operations |

Note: Of the 26 Senate Committees - the Council stays current with 12 and of the 37 House Committees - Council stays current with 17 of the 26 Senate Committees = totaling 29 of 63.

TRADE ASSOCIATION

Sometimes running a stellar organization depends on the opportunity to learn lessons from others and reflect on the decisions being made in our organizations. The trade association side of our work is dynamic, impactful and important to the everyday work of CSCs. Activities provide dedicated time for members to discuss, plan and re-think ways of doing business. The trade association provides members the opportunity to learn from others, share lessons learned, connect CSC team members to peers from other organizations, hear from experts, receive tailored technical assistance, and have access to an array of resources.

Information Exchange

The Information Exchange is dedicated time on quarterly board meeting agendas set aside to allow members to share best practices and lessons learned in key areas of operation. The primary goal is to support CSC’s efforts by making available resources across CSCs related to strategic planning and operations. The Information Exchange is a structured method of effectively sharing across CSCs to provide professional development, increase efficiencies, generate ideas and creative thinking, and to increase of knowledge. Previous exchanges include:

- Referendum Strategies

- Communications and Outreach Strategies (accompanied by a resource book of current research and best practices tailored to each community)
- Community and Strategic Planning
- Decision-Making Strategies for Funding
- Return on Investment

Upcoming plans include securing both national and state experts on RevMax issues to ensure that each CSC is fully utilizing, to the maximum extent possible, policies and procedures that add flexibility and maximize funding. We know that RevMax is even more important than ever in the health care arena where the Affordable Care Act is making way for new opportunities to maximize investments while also generating new, never seen before obstacles. The Information Exchange component of our work is critical given we know that issues impacting one CSC will inevitably and eventually impact all others.

Access to a Member's Only Online Resource Center

We are currently in the final phases of a project intended to create and provide an online resource center for use across member CSC teams. We are designing an online SharePoint© website that will be home to hundreds of resource documents created by peer CSCs, by us, and by other experts in several categories including Referendum, Legislative, Communications, Business Operations, Social Media Tools, Research and Data, Return on Investment, and Program Evaluation. This online resource will serve as a historical archive storing key documents and resources as well as current, up-to-date resources.

Exposure to the Council's Extensive Partnerships

In partnership with the Florida State University's Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy, the Council will work with individual CSC researchers to highlight the areas in which the CSC investments have made positive differences in communities. The CSC spotlight data will be included in the Center's exclusive Baby Book funded by the federal Early Childhood Comprehensive Services Grant. The Council and CSC researchers will have the opportunity to showcase CSC data representing improvements across community indicators in a 2014 publication intended for statewide distribution including members of the legislature.

State Agency Connection

Tallahassee is home to 45 state agencies and organizations. We take pride in our ability to appropriately connect local CSCs when the need arises. When requested, we are quick to utilize our networks within state government to assist local CSCs in the navigation of the complex nature of agencies, people and projects.

Recently, the CSC of Broward County expressed interest in connecting with leadership at the Agency for Persons with Disabilities regarding their local program successes with two programs geared at improving employment opportunities for youth with disabilities - the CSC needed direction on the appropriate in-road to access leadership. We were able to arrange a face to face meeting within two weeks in Tallahassee with us, CSC staff and APD leadership including the Executive Director, Chief of Staff, and the External Affairs Director. This meeting was a success and provided two local CSC staff an opportunity to make connections and share their information with the appropriate audience. This initial meeting opened up several following opportunities for both the Council and CSC of Broward. Currently, both CSC of Broward staff serve as workgroup members on a project led by APD and the Executive Director of APD recently traveled to Broward to learn more about the work of the CSC. Additionally, we have been asked to attend and share information at several following meetings on behalf of the work of CSCs.

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Opportunities

My colleague and I have been involved with the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet since its inception in July 2007. We closely follow the work of the Cabinet and have had several opportunities over the years to either be involved in committee work or serve as project leads. We actively engage with Florida's Chief Child Advocate and look forward to establishing a working relationship with the next appointed Cabinet chair. Not only are we recognized and respected by members of the Cabinet as subject matter experts, but we also have working relationships with every agency serving on the Cabinet and several ex-officio members including:

- Agency for Health Care Administration
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- Department of Children & Families
- Department of Education
- Office of Early Learning
- Department of Health
- Guardian ad Litem
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Governor's Office of Adoption & Child Protection
- Toni Crawford, Advocate
- David Lawrence, Children's Movement
- Dr. Judy Schaechter, Univ. of Miami
- Senator Eleanor Sobel
- Rep. Gayle Harrell

Networks and Professional Development

In addition to the roles and responsibilities of the Firm, we also have three major networks connecting the work of professionals across CSCs.

Research Network. We meet with a team of CSC lead researchers and evaluators two to three times per year. During these meetings critical best practices are shared across business practices dependent on research, both conducted externally and internally. Members also discuss strategies to aggregate data across CSCs to maximize the impact of services and programs on a state level.

Communication Network. We stay regularly connected with CSC Chief Information Officers (CIO) on a wide array of topics given that their roles within CSCs touch every aspect of the CSC's work. Individualized resources have been created for CIO's regarding the launch of successful awareness campaigns, media, outreach and awareness, best practices for Facebook and Twitter use, and resources focused on community engagement.

Administrative Network. We work consistently to ensure that each of our executive administrative assistants is armed with the information they need to ensure the success of their Executive Director. This includes an up-to-date directory, upcoming meeting schedule details and access to meeting materials. We prioritize keeping this line of communication open to ensure that each member CEO has the information and materials they need regarding our work on their behalf.

Connections in Action

We are often involved and invited to serve on state-level Task Force's charged with making changes to services locally. Recently, we were personally invited to serve on the Governor's Task Force for Students with Disabilities. This invitation came after a one-on-one meeting with Dr. Frank Fuller, Senior Policy Advisor on Education in the President of the Senate's Office. The major emphasis of the Task Force is to increase the graduation rates, access to post-secondary institutions, and increased employment rates for persons with disabilities. This is a priority for President Gaetz (R-Destin) and incoming Senate President Andy Gardiner (R-Orlando). The group spent considerable time planning recommendations and strategies in three major themes: 1) developing a parent/physician network for children birth to 8 to increase earlier detection and intervention; 2) developing an equivalent

diploma that does not limit post-secondary or employment opportunities; and 3) developing a clear pipeline to transition from school to post-secondary or the workplace. We have been personally asked to work with the Senate President's Office on the development of the parent/physician network.

Invitations to Exclusive Events

The Council and one member of the Children's Trust were among the limited 200 special invited guests to attend the 1st Annual Sayfie Review Inaugural Leaders Summit in Orlando joining more than 30 legislators. The mission of the Summit was "Engaging Florida Leaders, Shaping Florida's Agenda, Prospering Florida's Future" and was supported by a group of Thought Leadership Partners including: Florida Council of 100, Florida Chamber Foundation, Florida Philanthropic Network, Florida Press Association, Florida Public Broadcast Service, Foundation for Florida's Future and Leadership Florida. The exclusive 200 invitees were selected by the Thought Leadership group and had the opportunity to discuss some of Florida's most pressing challenges. The bi-partisan generated more than two dozen goals and we were thrilled at the opportunity to interact, network and plan with Florida's premiere leaders in education, child welfare and health.

National Organization Benefits

We are able to connect locals to national corporations offering resources and opportunities. This year we facilitated the connection between a special project of Scholastic Corporation and a local CSC. With interest in the Fort Lauderdale area, Scholastic sought our guidance on which organization to partner with to make a service day a reality. We promptly connected Scholastic to the local CSC and the planning began. Scholastic worked to provide a make-over to a child care program and provided a family resource library, resources, books and learning materials. The CSC coordinated with community partners to select the site and to facilitate the make-over that benefited the community. There are many wonderful direct and indirect benefits to this emerging partnership and the CSC, as well as, Scholastic benefited from a multitude of positive press and messaging.

I hope that the activities presented to you in this letter paint the picture of our broad involvement across issues impacting CSCs. While this is not an extensive outline of our work and the benefits of the association, I hope this provides greater insight on our goals, activities and the advantages of membership. We appreciate the opportunity to provide this follow up and make ourselves available to answer any questions you might have.

Warmly,

Brittany Birken

Brittany Birken, PhD

cc: Marci Biddleman