



COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Milwaukee County

June 16, 2011

The Honorable Alberta Darling
Room 317 East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Darling:

In Milwaukee County we believe parents should be primarily accountable for supporting their children. Consequently, we are very concerned that the reduced State funding for Child Support will result in a devastating decline in the number of paternity cases and support orders established, and the amount of child support collected, creating a greater burden on State taxpayers. While we understand that it was the Committee's intention to encourage further cost-efficiency in the Child Support program, the extent of the GPR reduction and language in the motion are likely to have a contradictory effect.

Since the implementation of federal performance incentives in the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pol/related/3130.htm>), Wisconsin's Child Support Program has focused on providing families effective and efficient child support services. In fact, Wisconsin was a leader among states in modeling its distribution of funds to counties based on a formula similar to the performance measures used by the federal government, maximizing Wisconsin's ability to earn federal performance incentive money. This has clearly worked in the State's favor, bringing in a higher proportion of federal incentive money compared to the size of our state.

Faced with the federal funding cuts in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, in 2006 the State invited the counties to participate in a Child Support Summit with the goal of streamlining delivery of child support services. As a result of the Summit and related activities, local child support agencies and the families they serve weathered a significant reduction in funding with only a slight reduction in performance. Note that during this period Milwaukee County Child Support (MC CSE) lost 38% of its staff, or 78 of 206 positions. It was at this time that MC CSE and Racine County joined forces via a contract, in which MC CSE is the call center for both Child Support agencies. The FTE's are included in the MC CSE budget for the Racine County CSE workload.

Under the GPR funding reduction contained in the proposed budget, and using the State's current distribution methodology, MC CSE anticipates losing an additional 38 staff positions (a 29% reduction in staff). This will increase our caseload size per FTE from 1,031 cases to 1,457 cases (numbers reflect caseload/FTE as of 3-31-11). We have reached a point where further funding cuts result only in diminished services, not increased efficiency. **An estimated 25,000 families in Milwaukee County will not receive child support payments under this budget due to the lack of adequate funding.**

Additionally, we are concerned that Motion #50's requirement that reductions not be allocated across-the-board will result in a particularly negative impact upon MC CSE. Historically, up to and including this year, Milwaukee County has received a proportionately smaller amount of funding per case than any other county in Wisconsin. As a result of this funding discrepancy, along with the unique social and economic conditions present in Milwaukee County, MC CSE has not had the luxury, like other counties, to pursue performance levels exceeding the federal minimum requirements. Instead, we target staff efforts on meeting the specific performance measures,

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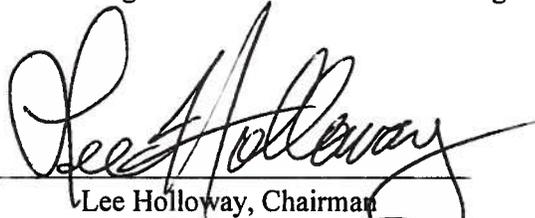
and then move on to other non-performance related requirements imposed by the State. Comparing MC CSE's performance to that of substantially smaller or wealthier counties is of the apples-to-oranges variety. The paternity establishment performance measure best illustrates the problem created by the additional language of Motion #50. Both the federal and State contract performance level is 90%. Milwaukee met this goal, finishing FFY 2010 at a performance rate of 90.50%. All of the other counties, however, exceeded 100%.

Almost one half (48%) of the children who live in Milwaukee County are served by this office. MC CSE operates a cost effective program. For every dollar spent on administrative costs, \$5.04 is collected from the non-resident parent and distributed to families. These funds reduce dependency on public assistance programs; for every \$4 spent on the Child Support program, \$5 is saved in public assistance benefits. In the past three years, Child Support Agencies have collected an average of \$12.25 million in old AFDC debt recovery, which is reinvested in the TANF program. **In calendar year 2010, MC CSE collected, on behalf of the State of Wisconsin, \$4.6 million as reimbursement for State-covered birthing expenses (Medicaid – BadgerCare).**

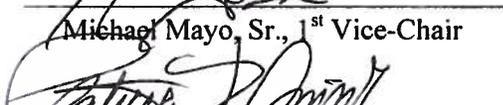
Therefore, we urge you to reconsider:

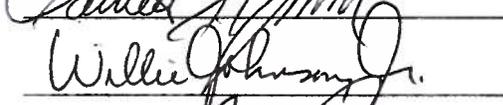
- (1) The reduction in funding for the Child Support program statewide. This is already an effective and efficient program, which holds parents, not the taxpayers, primarily accountable for their children.
- (2) The overly specific language in Assembly Bill 40 as to how the Department of Children and Families is to measure performance for incentive funding for the next two years. Motion 50 gave the Department – the experts in measuring Child Support performance - latitude to establish performance measures best suited for Wisconsin's program. AB 40, as drafted, unnecessarily restricts the Department's flexibility, and deters county agencies from creating cost effective cross contracting for efficiency, as demonstrated by our call center contract.

Sincerely,

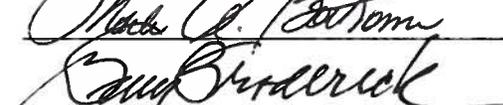

Lee Holloway, Chairman

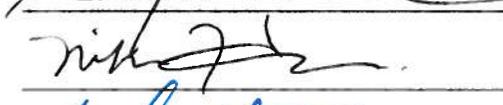

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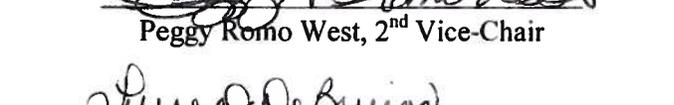

Gary Brudwick

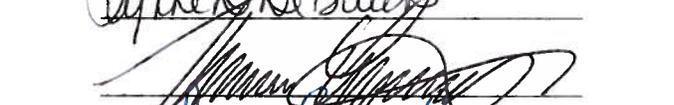

Rick


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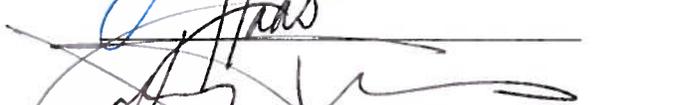

John

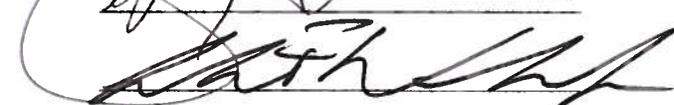

Peggy Romo West, 2nd Vice-Chair


Lynn DeBuijs


Jim


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