

Children's Trust Fund

Wisconsin's Resource for Preventing Child Abuse

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Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families

Wednesday, July 15, 2009
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Room 411 South

Testimony
Richard Schlimm, Chair
Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board

Thank you Representative Kestell, Senator Taylor and members of the Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families for inviting me here today as the Chair of the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board.

The Board's vision is to create a culture in Wisconsin that values children and supports families and communities in keeping them safe. We advocate for state and national policies and legislation that prevent child abuse and neglect and promote the well-being of families; we lead statewide public education and social marketing efforts on positive parenting and the developmental needs of children; and we fund evidence-informed programs and services that address the complex needs of families.

At the March 3, 2009 meeting of the Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families, you requested that Mary Anne Snyder, Executive Director of the Children's Trust Fund ask the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board to provide recommendations on changes that could be made to enhance the Family Policy Board proposal.

The Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board met on April 3, 2009 and voted unanimously to uphold its original position, which was submitted to this Committee on January 26, 2009.

The position of the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board is to not support or endorse the Family Policy Board proposal. The Board agrees that there are many enhancements that could be made to increase collaboration among state and

local agencies. In that regard, the Board is working very closely with the Department of Children and Families to create a more seamless continuum of services for children and families at risk of abuse and neglect. In addition, the Board has a designated committee that identifies barriers to collaboration, as well as gaps, and inconsistencies between state systems. The committee will put forward recommendations for better coordination of services; flexible, compatible and complimentary policies and procedures between agencies; and propose solutions to enhance service delivery in Wisconsin. We feel that creating a Family Policy Board at this time will be redundant and will hamper our ability to use our very limited resources in a strategic manner.

It's important to also note that since the original Family Policy Board proposal was presented to your Committee, Governor Jim Doyle has created an Early Childhood Advisory Council. This Council is chaired by Secretary Reggie Bicha and Superintendent Tony Evers and recognizes the importance of early childhood education, including family support, health, and mental health. There are many high level individuals representing a variety of professions that will be identifying a coordinated and collaborative approach to federal, state, and local early childhood education programs. This is another venue that can and will address many of the issues raised in the Family Policy Board proposal.

We have much to be proud of in Wisconsin. We are often times seen as leaders and innovators. Yet there's still much more we can do to improve the lives of children and families in our great state. The Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board remains committed to continuing to build our strong partnerships with state government agencies and the legislature to ensure that all Wisconsin children are safe and their families have the necessary resources to support themselves.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify this morning. I'm happy to answer any questions that you have.