

Representative Monica Murnan
1313 Mallory Court
Pittsburg, KS 66762

Chairman Waymaster and Member of the Committee,

Thanks for the opportunity to visit with you this morning about something very important to me and my community of Pittsburg. For seventeen years I worked with a large group of folks in Pittsburg to create and operate a place for kids and families.

Back in 1995, the hospital, the school district and the university had banded together to create a place where all kids could get the same start...a start that would be a mixture of child care, preK, adult education, special education and community resources. It was based on this "new idea" of bringing kids to school ready to learn.

Even with fourteen agencies and organizations in the mix, sustainability was hard. What great news it was when, in 2001, we heard of this thing called the Tobacco Settlement....and the work of the legislature to take this new money and dedicate it to kids 0-5. More importantly, the news was great because the money was not only dedicated...it was going to be used to support community defined efforts that fit into a broad framework.

As an original grantee of the funding that became available to communities to support early childhood efforts, we were honored and quickly became aware that this was special money...it was money that was meant to do new and innovative things, to get to the root of the issues and to spend wisely. It was clear from Day 1 and it continues to be clear.

In my career, I have had the opportunity to work with many state agencies and funding sources. The CIF is special. Here's why:

- The legislators here at the time, knew they needed to protect it. Human nature will be human nature. It's not tax money, so it's easy to sweep.
- The framework of the original legislation provides for bipartisan oversight and clarity of purpose. If you haven't read the original legislation, I would encourage you to do so. It's really good.
- The designated use of the money is based in science and research.
- The governmental infrastructure to administer the funds is small and efficient.

- The mechanics of distribution of funds are evidenced based and clear to communities and stakeholders...but more importantly translate into direct services to kids.
- The accountability of the entire CIF system is one of the most stringent and consistent I have ever been involved with...and I've been involved with many grants, contracts and partnerships.
- The daily operations of the staff and stakeholders is focused, meaningful and flexible.

So some would say I'm missing the point, this bill doesn't change any of these things. See item 1. It does. Without the protections, we have erosion. Erosion from that human nature we have seen in other community infrastructure. Erosion where something important falls through the cracks. Kids and families.

Since those original days, these funds have allowed for those of us in the bottom right hand corner to band together to make ourselves stronger. Now Cherokee, Crawford, Bourbon, Neosho and Allen Counties are a team. Just a little money in a clear package being used for leverage. The leverage is dependent on communities, families and most important the state's commitment to protecting the money.

The leverage goes away without the protections offered in the original legislation. Maybe not this year, but the farther away we move from a "shift to SGF", the easier it becomes.

In simple terms, because we are all getting tired here....leave the CIF alone and let's move along to other options.