

TESTIMONY ON SF 2088
ON BEHALF OF EVERY CHILD COUNTS
February 8, 2010

Every Child Counts staff were actively involved in the LEAN event, a broad-based planning structure to review Community Empowerment and make recommendations for state and local governance and management improvements.

The LEAN team came forward with a number of recommendations that Every Child Counts, as a participant in the process, endorsed. The current reorganization legislation passed by the Iowa Senate goes directly counter to several critical recommendations from the LEAN event.

Every Child Counts urges the Iowa House to return to the recommendations from the LEAN event in the following areas.

First, wherever the new Early Childhood Iowa Council is housed, it should include citizen and community representation consistent with the LEAN recommendations of fourteen citizen members and seven agency directors. The Early Childhood Council should have rule making authority regarding the state Council and local Boards.

Second, the Early Childhood Iowa stakeholders group currently established in Section 135.73 and 135.74 of the Iowa Code should be retained as a coordinating and planning entity around cross-agency planning and implementation issues.

In addition, Every Child Counts believes there are opportunities for continuous improvement, improved coordination, and greater results-accountability for all early childhood programming in the state, including programs and services funded under Community Empowerment, other state and federal grant programs, and Iowa's Voluntary Preschool program. Every Child Counts supports the LEAN recommendations regarding levels of excellence for area Early Childhood boards, but believes these can be further extended and refined and would ask the General Assembly to give consideration to further actions in this area, with a major role for the new Early Childhood Iowa Council and the stakeholders group.

Iowa's structure of state and community empowerment boards and a stakeholder group has been recognized nationally as a model for governance that enables both state oversight and leadership and community initiative and ownership.

Every Child Counts urges the General Assembly to retain a governance structure that continues this role. Every Child Counts can provide specific statutory recommendations to achieve these ends.

- Michelle Stover-Wright, Every Child Counts (on behalf of Sheila Hansen, Every Child Counts)