BUDGET NEWS LOOKING GRIM.....Both the House Social Service Budget Committee and the Senate Ways and Means Subcommittee on SRS have now completed their budget process and moved their committee reports out in full committee. The news, falling on the heels of last week’s deepening budget shortfall report, is not good. The Children’s Initiative Fund which provides funding for programs important to KCSL has taken major hits in both versions.

In House Appropriations on Friday, the social service budget committee deleted $5.0 million from the Early Childhood Education Block Grant, transferring these funds to the foster care program and, then, reducing State General fund foster care expenditures by the same amount. Additionally, the committee removed $2.0 million in CIF money for the Early Head Start Program. In defending the move, Rep. David Crum, R-Augusta, pointed out they were still leaving “substantial” dollars for some of this programming and leaving the programs in place. Rep. Jerry Henry, D-Cummings, offered an amendment to preserve CIF for its intended purpose, but the amendment was defeated. Rep. Henry made a second motion to review this decision at omnibus...a very small victory for the children and families who benefit from programs like Smart Start, Early Head Start and early childhood education financed in part by CIF block grants.

Equally devastating was the subcommittee report on SRS offered to the Senate Ways and Means Committee Thursday morning. This budget report calls for a $5 million reduction for Smart Start, a $5 million reduction for the Early Childhood Block Grants and a $2 million reduction for Early Head Start Program. Although it is not under their prevue, the subcommittee also suggested CIF cuts to the tiny K program, a KDHE initiative, by $2 million and cuts to Parents as Teachers, housed in the Department of Education, by $3 million. The only positive, from the perspective of the providers, offered in this report: the Children’s Cabinet would determine, rather than the Legislature, how to distribute the remaining CIF dollars. The subcommittee, many of whom are considered to be champions for early childhood programs, was visibly shaken by the responsibility of having to propose these dire cuts.

In a meeting Friday morning, Jim Redmon from the Children’s Cabinet said there was no determination yet on how the money would be divided if the proposal for Cabinet involvement prevails. He also pointed out that, because of the grant cycle, most programs would not feel the full impact of these cuts until January 2011. Maybe, by then, there will be better economic news.

The next step in this process is floor debate. Representatives and Senators who do not serve on either of these budget committees will have the opportunity to make their own recommendations in the form of amendments to the budget bill.

KCSL advocates are encouraged to talk with their legislators about these funding decisions. Legislators represent their constituents, so it is important to help them understand your priorities. With revenue lagging, the state can either cut expenditures or increase revenues. Be prepared to share your opinion in the effort to balance the budget and preserve those programs which make Kansas a great place to live.
THE LEGISLATIVE CLOCK IS TICKING....Committees will work hard next week to finish hearings and deliberations on those bills they hope to move forward before first adjournment. Thursday is the last day for committees to move bills out. After that, legislators will spend extended time on the floor debating the bills under consideration. The Mega bill, the budget bill, will be a part of that debate. Legislative leadership hopes to conclude this initial work by Friday, April 2.

BILL WATCH....Here are bills of particular interest to KCSL.

SB 305: An act concerning the Kansas tort claims act; relating to charitable health care providers including mental health practitioners. Passed Senate 40-0; assigned to House Judiciary; hearing 3/10

SB 399: An act concerning crimes, punishment and criminal procedure; relating to aggravated endangering a child; controlled substances. Referred to Ways & Means; passed out of committee 2/25 as amended; withdrawn from calendar and rereferred to Judiciary KCSL IS A PROPONENT

SB 452: Purchase or consumption of alcoholic beverages by person less than 18 years of age; detention. Passed Senate as amended, 40-0; Referred to Federal & State, hearing 3/10

SB 459: Juvenile offenders; jury trials. Passed 40-0; referred to Corrections & Juvenile Justice; hearing 3/15

SB 460: An act concerning children; relating to permanency; priority of certain orders. Passed Senate; assigned to House Judiciary; hearing 3/15

SB 476: Imposition of sales tax on certain goods and services, elimination of certain sales tax exemptions and fund-raising sales. Referred to Assessment & Taxation; hearing 3/15 KCSL OPPOSES THIS BILL

SB 522: Consent to adoption and termination of parental rights; factors to consider in weighing whether a parent must consent to a stepparent adoption; factors to consider when terminating a parent's right. Judiciary, hearing 2/23, final action 2/25; referred to Judicial Council for further study

HB 2118: Social worker safety training. Health and Human Services, possible action, 3/9

HB 2403: Transparency and accountability in purchasing and state spending act. Appropriations; on House Calendar, General Orders; Rereferred to Appropriations

HB 2461: An act concerning the department of social and rehabilitation services relating to the contracts for foster care, adoption and placement of children. Referred to Federal and State Affairs, Hearing 3/2

HB 2511: An act concerning children in need of care; relating to reimbursement of costs of care for child in a grandparent’s custody. Federal and State Affairs

HB 2512: An act concerning children in need of care; relating to powers of the court. Federal and State Affairs, hearing 3/17

HB 2549: Imposition of sales tax on certain goods and services, elimination of certain sale tax exemptions and fund-raising sales. Taxation; passed out of committee as amended – non-profits were removed -- without recommendation; currently on House Calendar; KCSL OPPOSES THIS BILL
Week Ten Meetings of Interest....

**Monday, March 15:**
10:30 a.m.  Ways & Means, 548-S  
Hearing on SB 476, elimination of certain sales tax exemptions

10:30 a.m.  Taxation, 152-S  
Hearing on SB 516, increasing the rate of sales tax

1:30 p.m.  Corrections & Juvenile Justice, 144-S  
Continued hearing on SB 459, Juvenile offenders, jury trials

**Tuesday, March 16:**
8:30 a.m.  Senate Commerce, 548-S  
Discussion of post audit on taxes, exemptions

**Wednesday, March 17:**
1:30 a.m.  Federal & State Affairs, 346-S  
HB 2512: Children in need of care; court authority

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