

OPINION

The Herald-Sun

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EDITORIALS

A bad policy

Durham County Department of Social Services is right: The shortage of affordable, high-quality child care is a problem for low-income families.

The solution that DSS Director Gerri Robinson proposes is a good starting point for conversation, but we're not convinced that it's right for Durham.

Robinson told Durham County Commissioners that families that qualify for child care subsidies should be able to use them to pay relatives, friends and babysitters. This isn't about moving children out of child care centers; it is, according to DSS, an attempt to help families that are already in the gap, unable to access services.

We sympathize with parents who struggle to find day care that they can afford, even with a cash boost from the county.

The truth is, child care is a struggle for most families, and particularly for low earners or single parents. The DSS plan gives parents the flexibility to create a cheaper child care network and connects them to the system of services.

The people who are eligible for subsidies are the people who can ill afford the \$6,000 to \$7,000 that the average day care charges for a year of service.

When we talk about the families that are currently eligible for subsidies, we are talking about foster children,

homeless children and children of teen parents, as well as special needs children, children living in homeless shelters and children who are living with aunts and grandparents. The kids who not connected to the DSS subsidy network have similar problems but none of the system's support.

That's where the DSS plan works. By connecting these kids with subsidies, we're also connecting them to nutrition programs, education and health care.

The problem for the community is that the DSS plan is a patch for a sprawling problem.

Research strongly suggests that putting low-income kids into Smart Start programs improves their readiness for kindergarten. The same UNC study indicated that poor children struggle more than their middle-income classmates. In other words, most poor kids need early intervention so they can keep up with their peers in school. We're not sure that the DSS plan will increase school-readiness.

We also worry that DSS doesn't have the resources to evenly serve the subsidy recipients, which raises the chance that this program won't connect kids as well as alternate plans — like increasing access to four- and five-star day care — would.

We urge the county commissioners to reject the policy change — but to fix the problems that inspired it.



AND SO, AFTER SOME DEBATE, THE BOBBLID RUN WAS RENAM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

An apology to the Tea Party and Klan

In my letter of Feb 8, I blamed our failed economy and high unemployment on the G.W. Bush administration. I also called the tea party a Klan rally. I was in error, as Ernie Wendell pointed out in an eloquently penned letter of Feb. 14.

I use this letter to apologize to all I may have offended. First, Bush did not leave Obama a failed economy, rising unemployment and a trillion-dollar debt. Obama is at fault; he did all that in less than a year. I am sorry for thinking that Bush was the worst president ever.

To the tea party people, I was wrong to think that you are morons. I now know you are good people with the signs you carry, calling Obama Hitler and a socialist. I believe you are true patriots when

you talk of leaving the union.

I will apologize to a Klan member, if I ever meet one. They are 100 percent racist, and the tea party is only 75 percent racist. Difference is, the Klan does not hide its opinions.

J. ALBRIGHT
Hillsborough

Defending Palin

The people who say that Gov. Sarah Palin is not smart remind me of the people who said Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley could not sing and Fred Astaire could not dance.

BOBBY LAWRENCE
Durham

The Fed's 'wise men'

Yesterday, the wise men of the Federal Reserve announced that they expect U.S. economy to grow at a rate of 3.5 percent next year. They said that, while unemployment will remain

OTHER OPINIONS

They were blinded by

Science, many scientists say, has been restored to her rightful throne

But there already supposedly was a broad, deep and unappealable consensus