

Faith leaders, others press Monroe County on child care cuts

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Dec. 05

democratandchronicle.com

Advocates still want Monroe County leaders to spend more on child care subsidies in next year's budget, but they have scaled back their request a bit.

A group of religious organizations called the Children's Interfaith Collaborative held a news conference

Thursday calling on the county to reverse a proposed \$1.3 million cut in child care subsidies next year and add another \$600,000 to the program. Earlier this year, advocates campaigned to boost child care subsidies by \$1 million.

"It's an attempt to at least negotiate and be reasonable to get some success," said the Rev. William Wilkinson of Trinity Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, which houses

the Jefferson Avenue Day Care Center, where the event was held.

Brigit Hurley, a policy analyst

for The Children's Agenda, which has helped spearhead the campaign, also said the groups recognize this is a tough budget year.

County officials have said that Monroe County already spends more than any other county in the state outside New York City on child care subsidies — more than it is required — and has blamed reduced state funding in part for the proposed cut.

The event came hours before the County Legislature's Ways and Means Committee held a public hearing on the budget. There, more than two dozen speakers from pediatricians to parents urged lawmakers to restore funding, calling the cut a short-term budget solution that will deliver greater costs in the long run.

"I'm not going to be able to work, and I don't want to be on public assistance," said Brittany Jarvis, 28, of Rochester, who has a full-time job and receives assistance to enroll her 4-year-old in Lakeside Child and Family Center.

But no child will be "unseated" who currently receives assistance, said Kelly Reed, the county's human services commissioner. She noted that a fraction of families went on public assistance when subsidies were last cut, and said her office must deal with reduced state funding to a multitude of programs supporting the entire family, from housing to food stamps.

Includes reporting by staff writer Brian Sharp.