

February 20, 2023

Dear Appropriations Committee members and staff,

My name is Karen Stewart, I live in Burlington, Vermont. I have received services from the Post Permanency Program at Lund Family Center since adopting my daughter, Olivia in 2016.

I am asking your committee to please increase base funding for the Post Permanency Services Program by \$300,000.

Raising a child is not easy. Raising a child with developmental and intellectual disabilities, attachment disorder, ADHD, FASD and significant speech delays is even more challenging.

- My daughter was adopted through the Vermont Foster-to-Adopt program.
- She is a feisty, spirited 9 year old. She has fiercely blue eyes and blonde hair (which she likes to cut frequently). She has multiple disabilities and she survived a very hostile womb.
- Her birth family has struggled with generational poverty and substance use and abuse.
- Despite her intellectual and behavioral challenges, my daughter is healthy, happy and progressing as a second grader and a caring member of our community.

I attribute the successes we have seen with our daughter and our family to the Post Permanency Services that we have received. Post Permanency has:

- Taught me how to view my daughter through a trauma lens
- Helped my daughter and me to bond as mother and daughter despite attach disorder and developmental trauma
- Linked me to critical services like early childhood developmental assessments, speech therapy, family therapy and at home personal care services
- Coached me through complicated IEPs at school
- Coached me through the annual visits with her birth mother that were agreed to through our PACA (Post Adoption Contract Agreement)
- Post permanency services have been the wrap-around service to help me navigate the extremely complicated and confusing system of medical care, mental health and parenting support that is needed to raise my daughter.

My daughter is 9 and she is the future of our great State. We understand her needs, her disabilities and her abilities much better through support from the Post Permanency Program.

My goal for her is to go to college and to give back to our community. She often asks me how we can help the homeless that she sees in our Burlington downtown. I am able to be a better parent to her because I have been supported through the Post Permanency program. The program has been a lifeline for me as I am an older parent and I do not have an extended family to support me in raising my children. My request to you today is to please increase the base funding for Post Permanency Services Programs by \$300,000.

Thank you for your time today.

Karen Stewart
Burlington, VT