

Title: Testimony for FY24 Budget Public Hearing in Support of Parent Child Center Network (PCCN)

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Good afternoon. My name is Korie Rice and I am on the Board of Directors for The Family Place in Norwich, Vermont. I am here to testify today on behalf of The Family Place and other Parent-Child Centers across the state. I am specifically calling on you to support an increase in base funding for the PCC Integrated Grant of \$5.2 million dollars for a total of \$10 million dollars for the Integrated Grant. By supporting this request, Parent-Child Center employees throughout Vermont would receive what they rightfully deserve and what is greatly overdue – increased wages and benefits. By increasing the financial support of these critical employees, Parent-Child Centers will hold steadfast in the workforce marketplace; thus leading to higher recruitment and retention rates. Because the services provided through each Parent-Child Center require strong, consistent relationships between families and employees, workforce recruitment and retention are crucial to the overall success of programming.

The trusting relationships Parent-Child Center staff form with families over time pave the way for parents in difficult circumstances to be honest about their challenges and needs. For example, within the past year alone, 44% of the individuals served through The Family Place's Families Learning Together program have reported histories of intimate partner violence. For one young mother, it was because of the wraparound supports The Family Place was able to offer her and her child, in partnership with a gender-based violence support organization, that they now have a safe place to live. Without the quality staff members who were able to help this mother and her child, I am not sure what their story would be today. I think we all know that leaving an abuser is complex and incredibly difficult to say the least. For a child in this situation, watching their mom receive the supports she deserves and making a new life for them, can be profound. The Family Place represents a shift in this mother and her child's life from simply surviving to being given the opportunity to thrive. And it is this opportunity that has the potential to impact generations to come. The Family Place provides this opportunity to thrive for individuals and their families every day with the innovative services Parent-Child Centers have created. By investing in Parent-Child Center employees, we are investing in the families they serve, and providing those opportunities for families to thrive. Again, I ask you to please support an increase in base funding of \$5.2 million dollars for the Parent-Child Center Integrated Grant.