

TO: Senate Health and Welfare Committee
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Testimony regarding:

- Vermont Foodbank
- Recovery Partners of Vermont
- Parent Child Center Network
- Vermont Afterschool, Inc.

Thank you for your consideration of the many budget requests before you. This document is a quick overview of the requests and current status of the four organizations listed above. I did submit a packet for each of the organizations.

Vermont Foodbank - B.1101 (p)(6) -----

- Request is for \$3million in base funding for food purchases and ongoing support to community partners as we continue to see heightened food insecurity in Vermont for the foreseeable future.
 - The Governor did not include any funding for the Vermont Foodbank, although the request was formally presented.
 - The House budget includes \$1million in one-time funding.
- The Vermont Foodbank is also supporting the request for an additional \$3million in base funding for Meals on Wheels (senior nutrition).

CURRENT REQUEST TO SENATE:

- **Please allocate \$3million in base funding to the Vermont Foodbank.**

I believe this committee may be more aware than most that the federal emergency allotment for SNAP has now ended, which means this month, families across the state are losing a significant amount in 3SquaresVermont monthly benefits, even as food costs remain inflated. The Foodbank has been working in close partnership with the State of Vermont for decades, but in recent years, that partnership has become even more critical as we faced the pandemic and all of the issues it created or amplified regarding food insecurity. I will make a personal statement here, which is that I have worked with dozens of clients over the years, and I have never seen the scale or scope of response that the Foodbank provided during the last 3 years, all with a focus on doing their level best to get food to Vermonters who need it in the most dignified way possible and using the most local food possible.

Included in the Foodbank packet is a handout with the most current statistics around food insecurity here in Vermont. You also have a handout that outlines the request from the Foodbank in more detail. Please note that the amount of the request (\$3million) was determined prior to the sharp rise in food prices. The need is not going to lessen on its own.

I also want to note that the funding that has been allocated over the past few years has helped to lessen the impact (although it may not seem like it) of the pandemic, by supporting the Foodbank's efforts to get food directly to families or to community partners and to also provide funding for the community partners to provide what is most needed in their specific communities.

This need is real, and this funding will help to catch some of the people that will not be able to get any other kind of help. We hope you will support the full request of \$3million in base funding.

Recovery Partners of Vermont (RPV) - B.313; B.1100 (o)(2) & B.1100 (o)(3) -----

- Request: \$1.85million base increase for Recovery Centers
- Request: \$1million base increase for Recovery Housing.
- RPV is also supporting the additional \$30k included in the House budget for rent vouchers.
 - Governor's budget level funded Recovery Centers at \$5,478,584 (dept ID 602913)
 - House budget increases base funding by \$1.85million for a total of \$7,328,584 for the state's 12 Recovery Centers.
 - A small note here that the original request for an increase of \$1.85million included 10 of the Recovery Centers, who were then the members of RPV. Recently, two additional Centers joined RPV, but their need of +\$500k in base funding is not reflected in the original request from RPV.
 - Another small note that \$100k of this request is specifically meant to go to Jenna's Promise, which was part of the original RPV request; however, this \$100k was moved from another one-time funding source for Jenna's Promise, so it is not actually an increase in funding for them.
 - House budget includes \$1million in one-time funding for Recovery Housing and \$30k in one-time funding for first month's rent vouchers for Recovery Housing.

CURRENT REQUESTS TO SENATE:

- **Support House increase of \$1.85million for Recovery Centers**
- **Shift \$1million for Recovery Housing to a base increase.**
- **Support House one-time allocation of \$30k for rent vouchers**

When someone is in recovery, having sober spaces where they can connect with peers who can help them navigate their own recovery path is very important. The people who work in these spaces are people who have navigated their own recovery path and now want to help others. The funding request for both the Recovery Centers and Recovery Residences is specifically to increase wages and benefits so that the folks who work in these spaces and provide these peer support services can also support themselves and their family. This work is crucial for our state and for the people who live here. We hope you will support these requests.

Parent Child Center Network (PCCN) - B.318 and E.318 -----

- Request is to increase base funding for the Integrated Grant by \$5.2million for a total of \$10million.
 - The Governor's recommend was to level fund the PCCN at \$4.8million (dept ID 603650)
 - The House added \$2million of base funding, which would be a total of \$6.8million.
- PCCN is also supporting the request for CIS IT funding, which was included in the House budget at the level of \$768,180 in one-time funding (section B.1101(p)(7)).

CURRENT REQUEST TO SENATE:

- **Please support the House's increase of \$2million for the PCCN.**

The PCCN's request is specifically focused on the issue of workforce. Your committee worked hard on a bill sponsored by Senator Hardy last year, which updated the Parent Child Center statute, recognized the Parent Child Center Network as a partner with the state for providing services to families with young children, and added some new accountability measures for the Parent Child Centers as they provide the 8 Core Services for families. There are 15 PCCs, and each covers a specific territory. In each community the PCC is the hub for services for families with young children, working closely in partnership with all the other service providers to make sure that families have support to get their babies and children off to a good start in life. The partnership with the State of Vermont for the 8 Core Services exists in the form of the Integrated Grant, which has its own line item in the budget.

The services that the PCCs provide are human services, and families do better when the people who are providing the services are consistent and can develop relationships over time. However, due to decades of underfunding, the PCCs cannot compete in the workforce market, so the turnover has been high and positions have remained vacant

over the years. This committee, as well as others throughout the legislature, has been paying attention to this issue for the past few years, and that has resulted in some increases to the PCC base funding; however, there is still a significant gap, as noted in one of the handouts I submitted. Thus, the PCCs have been asking for base funding at the \$10million level.

The \$2million allocated in the House budget would definitely help the PCCs across the state to bring their compensation packages more in line with market rates, and we very much appreciate the House's inclusion of this increase. It is important to note, though, that there will still be a gap, and we will likely be back until we can reach the \$10million level that would allow the PCCs to recruit and retain workers in a very competitive market.

One thing I would like to note is that it is very important that this increase is base funding because the intention (and the language included in the House budget notes this) is for this funding to go to wages and benefits, and that can't happen in any real way if it is not base funding. We hope you will support at least the \$2million increase in base funding that is included in the House budget for the PCCN Integrated Grant.

Vermont Afterschool - B.318 & E.500.1

- Governor's budget includes \$6,962,587 in CCFAP for afterschool/summer expansion
 - House budget "fences" \$54million base + \$30million one-time for childcare, waiting for S.56.
- Governor's budget includes language to codify a structure for the cannabis sales tax funds that are allocated to afterschool & summer
 - House budget keeps the Governor's language

CURRENT REQUEST TO THE SENATE:

- **Support the Governor's two budget items noted above.**

The ~\$7million proposed expansion to support the State's capacity to serve school age children and youth (ages 6-13+) aims to increase the number of programs that accept CCFAP and ensure that families are able to access these programs through the increased CCFAP subsidy. These funds fit into the overall plan for Universal Afterschool through the Interagency Afterschool Youth Task Force so that all youth and their families that want to access an afterschool or summer program have options in their community, and that those programs have the resources needed to meet the needs of all youth, regardless of where they live. We thank you for your work on S.56 and hope that this funding for school-aged children and youth will remain intact this year. We ask for your support for this funding specifically in the budget.

The language in E.500.1 of the big bill expands that of Act 164 of 2020 regarding a portion of the cannabis sales tax revenue to support the expansion of summer and afterschool programs, especially in underserved areas of the state. This language clarifies where the tax revenue would be transferred; codifies the intent for a mixed delivery system involving public, private, and non-profit organizations; outlines the use of funds; and creates an advisory committee to support the Secretary of Education in administering the funds. We ask you to support this language. We are very appreciative of all of the work that has been done to expand access to afterschool and summer, in this committee, throughout the legislature, and in the administration. The work being done here to achieve universal access to afterschool and summer programs is seen as a model for the nation. We thank you for your part in that work and look forward to continuing to work with you on this important issue.

Thank you for your consideration of these and the many other requests you will be reviewing.

Please let me know if you have any follow up questions, or if you want to talk to any of these organizations directly.