

FY24 Budget Hearing: Testimony - Amy Johnson, Director (Parent Child Center of Northwestern Counseling & Support Services - St. Albans, Vermont)

My name is Amy Johnson and I'm the Director of the Parent Child Center of Northwestern Counseling & Support Services. I am here today in support of increasing state funding by \$5.2 million for Parent Child Centers providing essential state services.

First, I would like to thank the legislature for their ongoing support of the PCC Network – funding increases and the passage of Act 150, in FY23, made profound impacts on our centers, the families we serve, and our greater community and state. Early experiences are an important public health issue, and it is clear the Vermont legislature recognizes and is supportive of those who do this important work.

To continue to provide prevention-based supports and services and build healthy communities in our state, we are advocating for a base funding increase of \$5.2 million to the PCC line in the FY24 budget. Underfunding has made providing all the needed services to families an ongoing challenge. Of equal importance, it has left vacancies in critical positions across the Network, resulting in increased caseloads and long waiting lists for services, all which impact retention and recruitment efforts.

It is important for Vermont families and communities that the services provided by PCCs are not only fully funded but of high quality and consistent across the state. An increase in funding will support the overall global health of the network by allowing for adequate funding of our prevention hub. An increase to our base funding will ensure that our state maintains a rich and robust network of family resource centers with high quality programming and staff to support families in these programs.

Investing in PCC's as critical primary prevention and upstream supports for children and families, strengthens families and communities. Every dollar invested in building healthy communities reduces the demand on our health care system and helps to ensure that more people will be healthier for longer periods of their lives.

The system exists to support families, and it is a robust one. Please continue to invest in the important work of Parent Child Centers. For Vermont families, PCCs are the answer.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

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