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My name is Kristi Lenart-Rikert and I live in Sharon, Vermont. I'm Director of Operations at Easterseals Vermont and have worked with the Easterseals Post Permanency Program for the past 20 years.

I'm here today to request that we ***increase base funding for Post Permanency Services by \$300,000.***

Post Permanency Services is the one statewide program that helps to wrap supports around families in an effort to prevent adoption dissolution and kinship placement disruption. Adoption and Guardianship can be the best outcome for many children who have been in foster care, but much of the real work begins after the papers are signed, as the newly formed family works to build strong bonds and lessen the impact of prior adverse childhood experiences. For many years, hundreds and hundreds of parents have expressed their appreciation for members of our team, which is comprised of adoption competent, trauma informed professionals.

In 2022, Post Permanency services helped 557 children with over 3300 different parent contacts statewide. For many years, we have demonstrated that these services are vital to creating and preserving health in our communities as well as the mental health and well-being of one of our most vulnerable demographics: children who have experienced early trauma and abuse.

We need the State of Vermont to invest in families by making Post Permanency Services sustainable. This program has not received a base rate increase in far too many years and services are at-risk of going away. The true break-even cost needed is a base increase of \$300,000 a year.

Thank you all so much for your commitment to Vermont families and for considering this request.