

## Family Leave Insurance Testimony 3.2.17

Good Morning.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee today. My name is Claire Kendall, and I am Co Executive Director of the Family Center of Washington County.

The Family Center of Washington County, one of 15 Parent Child Centers across the state, is the Parent Child Center for Central Vermont. We at the Family Center, along with the statewide Parent Child Center Network, are in full support of the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program - commonly referred to as “paid family leave”. Parent Child Centers support a statewide Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program that will help make our families, communities, businesses and state a healthier place.

The mission of the Family Center is ***building resourceful families and healthy children to create a strong community***. What better way to support that outcome than working towards a Family & Medical Leave Program for all Vermont’s families?

The issue of paid family leave is very critical to parent child centers, and the Family Center, where it’s always about the family. All too often in

our line of work, or in our personal lives, we come across the countless stories of families struggling to balance finances and job security along with raising young children. Too often parents have to choose between work and being with their young child. The first few months of a child's life are critical to healthy brain development and healthy attachment. Research has shown that infants thrive in loving, caring, nurturing and safe environments. Many working parents may wish to choose to stay home with their child, but cannot afford to take the loss in pay or risk losing their job.

Parents often find themselves in the position of scrambling and struggling to find child care for their baby. There are severe shortages of infant child care throughout the state, especially programs that are affordable and high quality, and accessible to families. Parents all too often, find themselves in the terrible position of having to choose between a program they can afford, *if they can find care at all*, and a program with a high-quality environment, trained staff and a location and hours that meet their work schedules.

Being a parent is one of the most important jobs there is. We all have a stake in ensuring that the next generation has a bright future. When parents have the opportunity to care for and bond with a newborn,

they are giving their children the best start, which will help Vermont's future generations thrive. It is critical to make the connection as a society that by supporting parents in being their child's first and foremost teacher, we are making an investment in the health and wellbeing of that child and that family's future, and in turn an investment in the future of our communities across the state of Vermont.

Thank you again, for the opportunity to testify today.