



February 16, 2017

Testimony provided to House and Senate Appropriations Community-Based Public Hearings on the FY2018 Governor's Proposed State Budget

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the need for additional resources for Children's Integrated Services (CIS). My name is Pam McCarthy, and I live in St. Albans Town. I am parent of four and a grandparent of five, which led me to my current role as the President and CEO of Vermont Family Network.

As a long-time advocate for children and families, I believe strongly in prevention and early intervention programs that are holistic, family-friendly, and results accountable, programs that lessen the impact of Adverse Childhood and Family Experiences (ACES and AFES) and build upon family strengths. In a time when we are seeing increasing pressures upon families that threaten their young children's developmental, health, and educational outcomes, it seems critically important that we invest more in what works, and what we are required to provide, under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

As a former Parent Child Center Director, Agency of Human Services Field Director, and now head of a statewide family support organization that hosts the largest CIS Early Intervention program in the state, I can speak to the impact of Vermont's unique early childhood efforts under CIS. As a community member and grandparent, I have seen evidence-informed home visiting and supportive services help parents effectively navigate their children's health and developmental challenges and more confidently prepare them for pre-K and school success. I urge you to support a \$2.5 million dollar increase in CIS funding, as part of a larger vision to get young children and their families off to a strong start and a successful finish. With almost a decade of flat funding, increasing family caseloads and complexities, and difficulties in the recruitment and retention of well-qualified staff, Children's Integrated Services' ability to realize the promise of Vermont's youngest learners and meet its legal mandate in early intervention under IDEA is threatened. We can "turn the curve," if we invest in families and young children before more intensive and expensive interventions are required to meet otherwise unaddressed health, mental health, educational, and developmental needs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to the need for a \$2.5 million dollar increase in Children's Integrated Services' funding in the FY18 budget. Please let me know how we can best support your deliberations around early childhood investments. I am heartened by Vermont's commitment to strong families and successful students. I know that together, we can make a difference for the future.

Sincerely,
Pam McCarthy
President/CEO, Vermont Family Network