

## **Jennie Martin, OCPCC Board Member**

### **February 13, 2018 Testimony**

Hello. My name is Jennie Martin and I live in Chelsea. I am the chair of the board of directors for the Orange County Parent Child Center.

I am here to support the Parent Child Center request to increase their Master Grant funding by \$8 million.

Before I was a Parent Child Center board member, I was an instructor with Central Vermont Adult Basic Education and I met weekly with young people at OCPCC who were part of the Families Learning Together program. We were working together to tackle their educational goals, which for most meant achieving their high school diploma.

During this time, I witnessed the epitome of high quality, nimble, professionally-delivered wrap-around services for these families. They were supported in building parenting & budgeting skills; in finding childcare & transportation. They were able to develop job skills, seek mental health counseling, each addressing the challenges they were facing one at time.

These young people built connections in their communities. They became employable, dependable, strong parents with high school educations and a new world of opportunity before them. I was hooked. I had to find a way in retirement to remain involved with this program and this organization.

Now that I am familiar with all that Parent Child Centers have to offer, I am able to see all the places in the community where positive impacts ripple back to a family's experiences at the Parent Child Center. As a board member, I am now also familiar with what it takes to keep a community organization running when the staff is underpaid and yet touching the lives of our most vulnerable families every day.

Parent Child Centers deliver services on behalf of the state of Vermont, but based on the current funding of the Master Grant, pay their staff an average of 30% less than the comparable state employee delivering the same service to families. In addition, Parent Child Center data often points to stronger outcomes for families.

We must compensate these talented professionals appropriately and give value to their work. Please support fully funding the Parent Child Center Master Grant.

Thank you.