Hello,

My name is Katy Leffel – I am a Family Center of Washington County Board member. I also receive services at the family center as my child attends the 5 STAR early childhood program and I am the MCH supervisor at Central Vermont Home Health and provide CIS home visiting services in the MECSH and NFP models.

I am here tonight to support the PCC's request to increase their Master Grant funding by $8 million. The Family Center of Washington County provides state services, however, these services are not currently adequately funded and the PCC and it's staff are put in the place of making up the difference. I have personal and professional experience of the essential services provided by the PCCs.

Just today I was visiting with a teenage pregnant girl recently enrolled in the MECSH home visiting program – she is currently unemployed and homeless. Her pregnancy is high risk and she was late entry to prenatal medical care. She has dropped out of high school and will need to finish her education after the baby is born in a few weeks. My first questions was, "have you contacted the Family Center?" I was relieved to hear that she was soon to begin working with the staff for her Reach Up benefits. However, there will be many points of access for her and the Family Center. My services are coordinated by the CIS team, she will need support accessing childcare and figuring out how to pay for it, she will need help with her Reach Up benefits and fulfilling her work or school requirements to remain eligible, she may need mental health support or other CIS benefits. All of these services are provided or coordinated by the Family Center.

My child also attends the Early Childhood program – I have been able to walk away from the Family Center five mornings a week, knowing she will receive high quality childcare in a stimulating and caring environment. The family centers provide a unique space for families of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to interact daily in a positive and supportive atmosphere.

Thank you for listening to my remarks.