



**Senate Committee on Appropriations
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On behalf of the Vermont Parent Child Center Network (VPCCN)

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Good afternoon, I'm Joe Ferrada, Co-Director of the Parent Child Center in Washington County (Family Center), and Parent Child Center Network Chair. Thank you so much for taking the time to listen to the Parent Child Center testimony.

Parent Child Centers were established into law in 1988 by the Vermont Legislature with the understanding that these family resource centers provided vital services to families. Vermont leads the nation as the first state to sponsor Parent Child Centers. We are the only state whose legislature has made this level of commitment and maintained it over time. Unfortunately, the funding hasn't kept pace with service needs and current market wages.

Parent Child Centers work alongside parents from pregnancy through early elementary years, supporting mothers, fathers and other caregivers to help children learn and grow, no matter what challenges they face - be it economic, medical, educational, mental health. We are designed to offer whole population services that support all children and families to thrive. The centers deliver upstream services that support families for optimal functioning. Our core Services include: home visiting, early childhood services, parent education, parent supports, on site services, playgroups, information and referral and community development activities.

Our flexible approach delivers successful results time and again because it focuses on the strengths families already have in addressing the challenges they face. This approach is consistent, accessible, and multi-generational – by design. The parent child center approach helps parents mitigate their own adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and prevent them for their children, which lessens education, healthcare and social service costs for everyone. The Center for Disease Control recommends strategies for preventing ACEs, which resonate with the eight core services PCCs offer.

Our funding for delivery of core services comes from a master grant holding multiple sources of funding for increased efficiency and collective accountability through results-based outcomes and performance measures. The consolidated grant is a great step forward; however, it does not adequately fund the state services that it requires the Parent Child Centers to deliver. Parent Child Center staff wages and benefits are continually 30% below market rates to comparable positions in education and state government. If PCCs are expected to continue to provide high quality state services, PCC wages and benefits must sustain the highly skilled people who do the work.

An increased investment in Parent Child Centers would help to support young children and families who need these critical services to help ensure family safety and stability; healthy child development; and families' access to quality parenting support and early care and education.

If Parent Child Center are expected to continue to provide high quality state services, PCC wages and benefits must sustain the highly skilled people who do the work. Master Grant funding must increase by \$8,000,000 to close the salary and funding gap.

Please help us by including our request in the budget memo to increase the Master Grant funding by \$8,000,000 to close the salary and funding gap.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony and please let me know if you have any questions.

Joe Ferrada