



**To:** Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Jane Kitchel, Chair  
**From:** Sarah Kenney, Deputy Director, Let's Grow Kids  
**Date:** April 4, 2018

**Testimony requesting increased investment in Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program and T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Vermont**

Good morning. My name is Sarah Kenney and I am the Deputy Director for Let's Grow Kids, a public awareness and engagement campaign committed to ensuring that all Vermont children, birth to five, have access to high-quality, affordable early care and learning programs.

On behalf of Vermont's young children and families, thank you for all your work for Vermonters, especially in another tight fiscal year, and for allowing me to speak with you today regarding two important issues for children and families: Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program, also known as CCFAP, and T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Vermont. These programs are important foundational cornerstones as we all work together in the coming years to build a future early care learning system that provides affordable access to high-quality care for all families who need it.

We respectfully request a funding increase of \$9.2 million to bring CCFAP reimbursement rates in line with 2015 market rates. As you know, Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program provides child care financial assistance to families that meet certain work, education, income and/or health criteria and children in foster care. Let's Grow Kids is committed to ensuring that all young children have access to high-quality, affordable care, and we appreciate your commitment to a funding increase for the CCFAP program last year through a new grant program. However, due to chronic underfunding, the program still faces a significant funding gap between how much the Child Care Financial Assistance Program reimburses child care providers and how much providers currently charge for their programming. These reimbursement rates are currently based on how much early care and learning providers were charging for their programs in 2008 and 2009 – meaning that some rates are now 10 years out of date.

This significant gap leaves families to make up the difference, and some families who receive assistance from the program are spending more than 40% of their income on child care. In order to ensure the program works as intended, Let's Grow Kids, in coalition with the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children, the Vermont Child Care Providers

Association, and members of the Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance are requesting a funding increase of \$9.2 million for the program to fix the current funding gap.

We recognize that immediate investment in CCFAP is a critical first step in achieving equitable access to high-quality child care for every Vermont child, so that we as a state can continue to progress toward the goals outlined by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High-Quality, Affordable Child Care. The Commission's report outlined \$43.5 million in immediate short-term investments necessary to make high-quality care more affordable for Vermont families. Bringing reimbursement rates up to a more recent market rate is an important step toward this goal.

Additionally, we respectfully request \$320,00 to support the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Vermont program. Let's Grow Kids supports the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children's request to allocate \$320,000 for state fiscal year 2019 to support the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program. This critical program helps current members of Vermont's early care and learning workforce who are non-traditional students seek education in early childhood beyond a high school degree. This appropriation would support the program's current cohort of 50 Associate's degree students and 20 teacher licensure participants while the program undergoes a funding and partnership transition.

We greatly appreciate this committee's support of early care and learning issues and thank you for your time and consideration of increasing funding for Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Vermont program.