

My name is Beth Miller and I am with Rutland County Parent Child Center (RCPCC), an organization that serves roughly 80 children throughout Rutland County. RCPCC focuses on the health and well-being of families and is uniquely positioned to offer a variety of crucial, integrated services all of which respond to the individual and sometimes complex needs of each of these children and families. Each of these services within this holistic system supports the other – this includes access to healthy food.

Rutland County Parent Child Center is aware that food security and adequate nutrition are true challenges to many of the families in Rutland County and across the state. 1 in 7 Vermont children live in food insecure homes and over 90% of the families served through the programs at RCPCC are living at or below the poverty line. Food insecurity, inadequate nutrition, and hunger are all Adverse Childhood Experiences impacting physical and emotional health, as well as behavior and academic performance. We know good nutrition builds a healthy brain – 90% of a child's brain is formed before the age of 5. Through Rutland County Parent Child Center's overlapping support services we help children and families get the nutrition they need to meet developmental milestones and increase success in their lives.

At RCPCC we provide 3,000 plus meals per month at our two Early Childhood Education sites, maintain a substantial food pantry, and are working with a 2019 Farm to School and Childhood Nutrition Grant through the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. These initiatives are essential to laying groundwork for healthy, stable families and require a well-supported, well-trained and integrated team of professionals. Good nutrition reaches Rutland County families through services such as Reach Up, VCFCR, Early Childhood Education, Childhood Integrated Services, and walk in community members. We choose to support nutritional services because it is within our mission as a Parent Child Center and because it supports our community. However, we provide these services at a deficit. Maintaining Reach Up and increasing Master Grant funding will help provide for and make accessible these crucial interconnected services.

State investment in Parent Child Centers builds on the truly essential work being done which has such positive and lasting impacts throughout Vermont. It also sends the message in the form of action of our legislature's strong commitment to the health and well-being of all Vermont families as we strive to welcome more young families into our fine state.

My request is increasing the PCC Master Grant by 1.5 million and allocating a one-time investment of 1.5 million so PCCs can pay for needed projects that have been put off due to chronic underfunding. PCCs should be the home for supports and services for Vermont families. Please do not allow the administration to end the PCC Reach Up Case Management contracts.