

Hi, My name is Emily Pickett and I am here today to ask you to stop the proposed state budget cuts specific to Parent Child Centers including Reach Up and VCFCR. These cuts would deny, on a monthly basis, 120 high risk families and youth in Rutland County case management and wrap around services and supports.

I have been a Reach Up case manager at Rutland County Parent Child Center for over a decade. I can attest to how important this program is to pregnant and parenting youth in our community. It is not simply "Reach Up" it is the youth portion of the program, which services the youngest most vulnerable Reach Up participants and their children. I am able to offer participants a high school education through our Learning Together Program, Family Support and Early intervention through our Children's integrated services program, Childcare through our Early Education Program, Parenting Classes, Cooking Classes, a food shelf, and perhaps the best part is that they have individuals to walk beside them while they create their community of support in a safe space that allows them to grow and learn. This work is both preventative and essential.

The wrap around services these families receive from the Parent Child Center are critical to the youth in our community. These families are youth who are parenting, and still developing themselves.

We are often the first people in their lives who look at them tell them that they are worth it, that we are proud of them, and that we are still going to be here even if they fail. We

are often the first phone calls when they are feeling overwhelmed, The first ones they call when their support systems fail, the ones who sit in their hospital rooms when they just delivered a stillborn baby. We are the ones who drive them to rehab and support them and their children in their recovery, we are the ones who attend doctors appointments, drive them to the hospital when they are in labor, support their education and cheer the loudest at their graduations.. [It is absolutely amazing to watch a 14 year old pregnant Learning Together student become a 20 year old Reach Up Post Secondary Education student at Castleton University earning all A's.] I have had many opportunities to apply for a state Reach Up position which would afford me healthcare benefits and a \$20,000 increase to my salary, but I choose this model as I have seen its benefit.

Because of these positive impacts on our community, I ask you to

1. Increase our Master Grant base by \$1.5 million for FY2020
2. For \$1.5 million in one-time funding to "catch-up" on deferred administrative and maintenance expenses.
3. No cuts to Reach Up or VCFCR