

Testimony to House and Senate Appropriations Committees
February 25, 2019
Springfield Town Hall

Laurel Mackin, Vice Chair, Board of Directors, The Family Place Parent Child Center

Thank you giving me the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Laurel Mackin; I am from Thetford Center and a member of the Board of Directors of The Family Place, which (as you know) is one 15 Parent Child Centers in Vermont.

I'm sure you also know that that Parent Child Centers like The Family Place exist thanks to the visionary work done by the Legislature. Legislators in the mid-eighties recognized that community organizations like ours could do the best job of helping families with special needs and they created a system to reflect that.

That system has been incredibly effective: Vermont's Parent-Child Center network has been nationally recognized as the best way to deliver services to young families and at-risk children.

It also proven to be an incredibly sound investment: research has shown time and again that there is no better payback for our social service dollar than those we put towards child development. We have seen Parent Child Centers pay for themselves many times over in the decades since they were established.

Over those decades we have also seen the demand for services skyrocket as children face risks that we never had to.

What we have NOT seen is any change in the level of support that the state provides. The original legislation may have been visionary, but PCCs are working with the same state support that they had 25 years ago.

As a board member, what I see now at the Family Place is an incredibly skilled and dedicated staff doing everything they can to meet the increased demand for services – services that the state mandates we provide – while every year they are given fewer and fewer resources to do so. All this at a time when the risks are greater, and the evidence is clear that every dollar invested more than pays for itself.

I understand the how many demands we place upon our legislators, and on your committees in particular. But adequate support for Parent Child Centers is not a funding request but a proven investment. The Family Place and its partner Centers provide essential state services in an incredibly cost-effective manner. If they aren't given the tools they need to do their job, both Vermont families and the Vermont state budget will suffer.