

February 25, 2019

Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees,

My name is Sasha Garfinkle, and I live in White River Junction with my daughter. I work at The Family Place in Norwich as an Administrative Assistant. It's important for Parent Child Centers to be around and funded because they are immensely helpful to so many people who have struggled and tried everything they could before swallowing their pride to ask for help.

When I moved to Vermont (February 29, 2012), I was two weeks clean from daily drug abuse and had left everything I knew and everyone I loved behind. I was 20 with a sixteen-month-old. It was recommended for me to attend the Families Learning Together program at The Family Place instead of jumping right back into minimum wage work. This program helped me attain my Reach Up work hours, and I got to meet other young moms in the area like myself, learned how to be a better parent to my child, and was able to attend the AA meetings I needed during the day. My child was in a healthy, safe child care center on campus, and my Reach Up case manager was close by.

Please do not to accept the proposed cuts to Reach Up or the elimination of the PCC Reach Up Case Management contracts. We should be supporting the Parent Child Centers in Vermont to help families in every way we can. For me, if Reach Up wasn't so intertwined with the Families Learning Together program, I might not have received the specific help and support that my family needed, and I might not be where I am today.

While in FLT and on Reach Up, I also received home visiting services, where a home visitor from The Family Place would meet me at a park, my daughter's child care, or at my house. My home visitor worked with my daughter on developmentally appropriate tasks and helped me understand what I should and shouldn't be expecting from her. When my daughter was struggling to fall and stay asleep, my home visitor gathered resources for me to review and we discussed my child's progress. It was vital for me to have a supportive adult in my life whose only goal was to see my family succeed.

I am lucky enough to be able to see so many families receive the help they need through The Family Place. I've been in my apartment for 5 ½ years, had reliable transportation of my own for 6 years, and I've been clean from drugs for just over 7 years. Being on Reach Up taught me how to ask for help, and helped me find the right people to ask. Having my Reach Up case manager at a Parent Child Center helped my family receive *all* of the services we needed. Both my daughter and I are grateful for the assistance and services we were provided with during a rough time in our life.

Thank you for serving, and thank you for considering my statement.



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