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Good evening, I'm Claire Kendall, Co-Director of the Family Center of Washington County. Thank you for taking the time today to listen to my testimony.

**Budget Request #1: Increase state funding for Parent Child Centers providing essential state services-** PCCs deliver critical & essential state services to families with young children, through their Master Grant and other grants and contracts with the Department for Children and Families.

Parent Child Centers (PCCs) are a network of 15 community-based non-profit organizations, serving all of Vermont. PCCs were created through Vermont Statute, and the purpose of each PCC is to provide "prevention and early intervention services such as parenting, education, support training, referral and related services to prospective parents and families with young children, including those whose children are medically, socially, or educationally at risk." PCCs are essentially the hub of services for families with young children – an actual place in the local community where families are always welcome and can always get the support they need, regardless of economic or family status.

The Master Grant is an ongoing effort between the PCC's and DCF to build consistency in service delivery and outcomes measurement across Vermont for the essential state services the PCCs are delivering on behalf of the state, including Home Visiting.

PCCs do more with less and prevent many expensive problems that could be down the road if young families were not met with the support they need, when they need it. PCC's are the answer to helping the neediest families get the support they need and build resiliency and move toward self-sufficiency. Our multi-generational support is unique and has a proven track record.

However, the Master Grant does not adequately fund the state services that it requires the PCCs to deliver. Parent Child Center staff wages and benefits are continually 30% below market rates to comparable positions in education and state government. If PCCs are expected to continue to provide high quality state

services, PCC wages and benefits must sustain the highly skilled people who do the work.

## **Budget Request #2: Prevent Reach Up budget cuts to Parent Child Centers**

Reach Up Case Management contracts at Parent Child Centers (PCCs) are crucial to the integrated, multi- generational approach that PCCs are able to provide to families. We are able, due to the funding streams that we cobble together, to provide a seemingly endless array of services and advocacy to and for young families. This has always been done with the help of the Agency of Human Services through the state's dedicated support of community agencies that are legislated and funded to provide services for the neediest Vermonters.

We are able to blend our work with a myriad of other services and relationships in order to create a family plan that is inclusive of all member of the family. PCCs often provide transportation, work sites, case management, childcare and housing support. In addition, we offer parental programming such as parenting classes and parenting support, and systems navigation - such as court advocacy, help with paperwork to stay enrolled in Reach Up, SNAP, ESD, DCF support, Health care, etc.

Parent/Child Centers are able to offer voluntary programming and advocacy and build relationships with families before, during and after a crisis in their lives. We have the trust and relationships to help people successfully navigate through and complete programs, leading to self-sufficiency. We also have the staffing and programs to help families from of all walks of life. Often, we know families before, during and after there is state involvement.

For our state to be showing lessening caseloads while the poverty rate for women and children is rising in Vermont does not make sense. PCC caseloads have remained steady. PCCs have traditionally held the youngest populations on Reach Up and our caseloads loads are not dropping but the age of parents is going up. People are still in need of services, even when they are not applying for benefits.

Thank you again for your time today.

Claire Kendall, Co Director