

Hello and thank you for taking the time to hear from us tonight.

My name is Courtney Farrell and I am the Director of Child and Family Services at Lund in Burlington, Vt., which is also one of Vermont's 15 Parent Child Center's.

As many of you know, poverty is dangerous for children.

Childhood poverty rates in Vermont are increasing.

The percentage of Vermont children under 6 living in poverty increased between 2010 and 2016, from 38.2% to 39.7%

Families living in poverty have a significantly higher likelihood of experiencing crises and poverty is still the greatest threat to child well-being and the best predictor of abuse and neglect.

In VT, poverty rates for single parent families with a female head of household are more than 3x the poverty rate for all families.

Poverty has also been established as an adverse childhood experience.

I am here tonight to tell you that Parent Child Centers are the answer.

**Parent Child Centers- or PCC's 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 support, education, 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 the hub of services for families with young children – an actual place in the local community where families are welcome and can get the support they need, regardless of economic status or family status.

Research has proven that prevention services targeted at reducing and treating adverse childhood experiences can dramatically reduce long-term health care costs. The PCC's use a family centered and multi generation approach that prevents and mitigates the impact of ACES on young children.

PCCs are funded through a master grant that adheres to the 2015 budget bill. However, the master grant does not adequately fund the state services that it requires PCC's to deliver. Master grant funding for all 15 of Vermont's Parent child centers is currently \$2 million dollars. Aside from a small increase a few years ago, PCC's have been level funded for 20 years. Master grant funding must increase by \$8 million to close the salary and funding gap.

As a result, PCC 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.*

***Master Grant funding must increase by \$8,000,000 to close the salary and funding gap.***

***To accomplish this PCCs are requesting a 3-year phased approach to get to the goal of \$10million increase for the PCC Master Grant.***

***I am asking that you support the following for Vermont's most at risk children and families:***

- ***The PCC request for FY2020 is to increase the Master Grant base by \$1.5million***
- ***We also request \$1.5million in one-time funding to "catch up" on deferred administrative and maintenance expenses that have been delayed as we have dealt with continued under-funding for decades.***

Additionally PCC's have delivered State Reach up services to families at our centers as a part of our family centered and protective factor building supports to children and families. This year the PCC Reach up contracts are also at risk of being cut as a result of an overall decreased Reach up caseload across the state. PCC caseloads have not experienced any decrease to date.

Reach Up case management at the Parent Child Center (PCC) shares a common expected outcome for participants as case management in the district offices- - increased work readiness resulting in unsubsidized employment.

Though the outcome is the same, the road to get there often looks very different. Embedded in the Parent Child Center, Reach Up case managers work with the youngest recipients of TANF and their families and embodies a wrap-around approach.

On-site access to integrated supports such as parent support and education, child care , CIS Home Visiting, supported housing, Reach Up job coaching and a Reach Up community based worksite offer warm handoffs to services making it more likely that the youngest parents will engage, and therefore, grow personally and in their role as a parent.

Strong collaboration with community partners ensures continuity of care and course correction for participants when necessary, especially related to housing, substance use treatment, mental health supports and DCF Family Services and corrections involvement.

This wrap-around case management (as prescribed in the current FY' 19 PCC Reach Up contract) is multi generational, both prevention and intervention oriented and has a proven track record of delivering high quality services to families at a fraction of the cost of basic case management at the district level.

I am asking that you Prevent **budget cuts specific to the Parent Child Center Reach up contracts for Vermont's most at risk children and families.**

Thank you.