

Hello. My name is Judy Harvey and I am the childcare coordinator at Lund Early Childhood Program, in South Burlington. In my position, I work with all kinds of families including families who earn substantial incomes, those who live in poverty, as well as those who are considered middle class. I hear the stories of families enrolled in our childcare and how they are struggling to meet the costs of tuition. I hear about the challenges for families who, because they are working, are not eligible for full childcare subsidy; yet they still cannot make ends meet after paying their childcare bill. I am here today to ask that, as budget decisions are being made about the CCFAP program, you consider the stories of Vermonters who are struggling to pay for childcare.

Vicki and Ed are parents of two young children. They both work; Vicki in social services at a local program and Ed as a cook at local non-profit. They live modestly, with a small home and they share one car. When Vicki and Ed first enrolled their baby in our program, they were thrilled. Our center is close to where they each work, so sharing the car and transportation would not be a problem. They wanted a high quality childcare center for their baby; in Vicki's words, they thought they had really "struck gold" and could not wait for their older child to get a spot in our program. Then the bad news came. Although Vicki had looked into childcare subsidy earlier in the year, when she applied this time, she found that she was only eligible for 10% coverage of the tuition bill. Weekly, this meant they would receive 18 dollars help towards a bill that was 188.00 for just the one child. Paying a childcare bill at almost full tuition for two children would have meant using all of their expendable income, and taking the father's entire paycheck. This was a true heartbreak; here is a family that lives within their means, works, contributes to our community and society and are trying to do everything our society says they should be doing. But yet they cannot afford the simple peace of mind of knowing their child is in a high quality center that they can afford. Vermont families should not have to face this choice.

Kim is a single mother of one, and works at a job in a local department store. Working is very important for her; she feels strongly that she needs to set a good example for her young child. Her involvement in the workforce is also important to her recovery. Feeling a part of something bigger, useful and accomplished in a community prevents the isolation she felt when she was using illicit substances. She is very proud to now be renting her own apartment in Burlington. Although she does not own a car, she uses public transportation to get her child to our center, which means a 10 minute walk each way in the morning and afternoon, as well as being on a bus for up to 30 minutes each way. She was able to secure full time subsidy for a year based on her family circumstances. At the end of that year, her subsidy was determined by her income and job requirements and this changed everything for Kim. Although she wants to work full time, the number of hours available to her depends on how busy the store is. Sometimes she is only needed part time and at other times she is able to get full time hours. Because of this unpredictability, under the current system her subsidy eligibility changed from full time coverage, to part time coverage. In order to keep her job, she still needs to be available when the store schedules her. This means that she needs to pay a sizable difference to maintain the full time spot in childcare so that she can be available to work full time, or at different hours during the day when asked. This, in effect, has plunged her back into living a life of poverty. With barely enough money left over after her childcare bill is paid, she is struggling but also determined to keep working. A member of our community

such as Kim, who is working and trying to better her life and her child's life should not have to bear the heavy burden of childcare costs alone.

We can certainly help families like this by expanding the income eligibility cap from 300% of the federal poverty level to 350% so that more children and families can also access affordable childcare and we can also adjust the sliding scale so that no qualifying family receives less than 25% assistance