

Public Hearing/Testimony given 02/11/2020

To: Brian Campion, Timothy Corcoran Jr. and Dick Sears

From: Cynthia Thomayer, Fiscal Manager Sunrise Family Resource Center

I am the mother of six children and twelve grandchildren. They all live in Bennington County. I'm a former VT State Register childcare provider, specially trained to assist at risk parents and babies, and I was a trained UCS Shelter Bed provider for youth in crisis.

I was also raised in Bennington County by a single mother who didn't complete any high school. As you can imagine I have a firsthand perspective of the struggles families in our community face that spans almost 60 years. There were no Parent Child Centers when I was younger. There were no case managers, or home visitors that could help us connect with available support services. There was no one to help us flee the abusive alcohol related domestic violence I witnessed as a child. There was no one except other family members, and oftentimes that just was never enough.

Today, there are safe havens like Sunrise Family Resource Center, one of 15 Parent Child Centers in the State of VT, for families. As you heard tonight, they provide many services to families from throughout the County. Together these services provide a "wrap-around" supportive approach to help both parents and children navigate the extreme challenges they face. Whether it is addiction, homelessness, childcare, unemployment, education, or just diapers, the Parent Child Centers are there for them-on the front line. The case managers get "up close and personal" with these folks to provide them with the best individualized support they can.

I urge you to support Bill S.263. Passing this bill will provide consistency of services and equalize funding statewide for these very important entities. I also urge you to engage in the conversation and consideration of long-range funding for these Parent Child Centers.

No family or child should go through what I did and with your support, no family or child from Bennington County will.