

Good evening. Thank you for being here tonight.

My name is Kelsey Francis-Fath and I am a teacher at the New Horizon's education program, one of Lund's Parent Child Center offerings. I would like to share a story about one of my students.

Audrey was 16 when she got pregnant. Already in her life, she had experienced many adverse childhood experiences. Consequently, she was often truant from school. She didn't trust adults and she didn't know who to turn to for help. She felt hopeless and afraid of how she would provide for herself and her child.

Then Audrey came to New Horizons and school started to feel like a safe place again - a community that she could trust. She studied the core subjects as well as childhood development and life skills classes offered as a part of Lund's PCC services. These courses allowed her to continue her education while simultaneously preparing for parenthood and independent living. When her child was born, she was able to bring the baby to school with her—and in doing so, she did not have to choose between being a full-time parent or a full-time student.

Because Lund is a Parent Child Center, Audrey was also able to receive a team of supportive providers and services - parent education, and Home visiting support, education and employment case management, concrete supports, and referral to other services such as therapy. Her PCC team worked in collaboration with school and with her therapist – all of whom helped her to reach her goals. The barriers that proved so powerful in her life started to diminish. She found stable and affordable childcare. She learned to budget and live independently. In the fall, she will graduate with her high school diploma and 3 college credits. Without PCC services, the likelihood that Audrey would have dropped out of high school is 60%.<sup>i</sup> Perhaps most importantly, Audrey learned to envision and experience success for herself and her family. She has a future she is excited about and her child is thriving and safe.

In my five years as an educator at Lund, I can attest that inspiring stories like Audrey's are prevalent. But in order for our clients to make these kinds of changes for their families, they need support. Support from their providers to help them set and reach their goals. Support from the community to help them realize their place as valued members of a larger whole. And support from their legislators to help protect the spaces in which they can transform their lives.

So tonight, I ask the Appropriations Committee to ensure Parent Child Center's essential work in our communities are fully funded so that these transformations can continue for Vermont's families for years to come. Parent Child centers are requesting a 3-year phased approach to achieve this. Our request for FY21 is to increase the Master Grant base by \$4million

Thank you.

---

<sup>i</sup> National Conference of State Legislators. *Postcard: Teen Pregnancy Affects Graduation Rates.*