

Thank you for taking the time to hear testimony this evening.

My name is Jamaica White and for 8 years I have worked in Parent Child Centers in Burlington and St Albans. I currently work at Lund's Parent Child Center, providing services to families living in Chittenden County. Although my title and location have changed over time, the essential work has been the same- to provide the support that families with young children deserve.

Parent child centers are the front line of services for families with young children – especially primary prevention services, which help to get children off to a good start, even if the family has challenges.

I would like to tell you about a family I first started working with at Lund over 5 years ago, when their child was just 9 months old. At the time both parents were in their late teens and did not have their high school education or jobs to support their young family. This family worked with me for the next year and they both found employment, however their history of trauma impacted their relationship and the mother lost her job. As I built trust with the mother she was able to share that she was experiencing abuse in the home. Her own family had a long history of substance use and physical abuse and she was not able to turn to them to help. I was able to connect her with housing resources and get her into a subsidized unit for those fleeing domestic violence. The family also began to receive home visiting and parent education services through our PCC to support mom with raising her young child now that she was doing it on her own. Through this and our continued work together she was able to find full time childcare and access other needed community supports for her family. Once these were in place she was able, after several false starts, to earn her high school diploma through Lund's high school Program. She was also connected to our clinical services to address her history of trauma and the impact that had in her daily life. Eventually she graduated from the subsidized unit and now holds a section 8 housing voucher and rents in the community. Her daughter now attends elementary school and is thriving. Mom has also secured full time employment and earns an income that allowed her to transition off of Reach up. I ended my services with the family last summer after nearly 5 years, however the connections she made and foundation she has built while working with our center will stay with her as she moves forward and uses all the skills she has built over time.

Over the years I have had the privilege to work with many families like this. I have seen their strength and resiliency and the wish for a better outcome for their children than what they may have had to experience themselves. I have seen the

hard work and dedication it took to make changes and choices that at times seemed impossible. I have been humbled by the insight and wisdom they have shown in the face of unending obstacles. And I worry what will happen to these families if we do not prioritize funding primary prevention services offered by Parent Child Center's.

Although I have told you one story, I am also telling the story of countless other families whose lives have been improved through their work with Parent Child Centers across the state. This service is vital to the wellness of Vermont. Vermont is only as strong as our most vulnerable, investment in them is essential to the well-being of all. Parent Child Centers are dedicated to serving the most vulnerable and to partnering with families to achieve the success they deserve.

In order to provide these essential services for families with young children, PCCs must be adequately funded. Parent Child centers are requesting a 3-year phased approach to achieve this. Our request for FY21 is to increase the PCC Master Grant base by \$4million

Thank you