

I am Donna Bailey and I am the Director of the Addison County Parent/Child Center and have been at the Parent Child Center (PCC) since 1998. I am speaking to you today about the importance of Bill S.263. It is time for a re-boot, if you will, of the statute for the Parent Child Centers in order to provide an adequate funding base to ensure that the prevention, intervention and treatment levels of work with families continues.

I want to thank Kari who makes the PCC story human and alive. She was my first tenant as a PCC landlord – we now have 10 units in our first time renters program and help young adults and families get permanent affordable housing in Addison County. Kari and I have worked and lived in the same community and we have kept in touch and now we get to work together to further help young families through education and training as well as through building healthy relationships that are lasting. This, to me is the definition of community and Parent Child Centers foster community and support to those who are new parents and to those who have lived in generational poverty. I have learned so much from Kari. For that I am forever grateful. Her daughter is heading off to college in the fall. I feel so proud to have been a part of her success story – she was a baby at the ACPCC and has had stable housing and a great parent, in part because of our supports. Kari had it in her, and we helped her to believe in herself and that has now passed down to her children.

I often say that I know our Parent Child Center makes a difference when I read the local paper and see our kids in the sports section or school success pages and not in the police log. This is not a

flippant remark, it speaks to the depth of the impact that our early care and parent education has on so many high-risk families.

Vermont is the only state in the union that has parent child centers in every district of the state, able to serve all Vermonters in need with a multigenerational approach. The flexibility of base funding allows for the work to meet the needs of individual families, regardless of age and income. We are able to home visit, meet people in the community, help families get to medical appointments and have an immersion of supports in our Learning Together programs on site. Learning Together is a parenting and job-training program to support young parents to complete high school and beyond and to build parenting skills and gain the supports needed to be self-reliant in adulthood. Our childcare programs are high quality and in some cases, therapeutic. Parents learning a new way to be with their children – how to talk and play and support their children in developmentally appropriate ways.

The reason for strengthening the statute is to recognize the role PCCs play in our system of supports and services for families with young children and to ensure consistency and quality in those supports and services statewide.

The statute has been updated once since the late 1980's when it was written and passed into law and that was in the 1990s. This was the work of the Parent Child Center Network's founding mothers and it was ahead of its time. The PCCs have developed over time and have become an integral part of the state's work with families with young children. Now, it is time to recognize the

maturity of the PCC system and the PCCN, and update the statute to reflect how the state is partnering with the PCCs to do this important work.

Thank you.