



1/25/21 -Budget Adjustment Testimony

Claire Kendall, Co Director

Family Center of Washington County

Good afternoon, Claire Kendall, Co-Director of the Family Center of Washington County. Thank you for taking the time today to listen to my testimony.

I am testifying today on the **FY21 BUDGET ADJUSTMENT to reallocate the \$4 million within CCFAP and pay child care programs on an enrollment basis.** On Tuesday, DCF presented to the House Human Services Committee DCF proposals for the FY21 budget adjustment.

- It is no surprise to this committee that additional funding for the childcare sector as a system is needed. We need higher pay for staff and teachers (comparable to k12 teachers) and more financial support for programs and families to ensure sustainability and affordability.
- It is time for the state to consider paying CCFAP subsidies to programs based on enrollment, not attendance.
- The payment process through CCFAP is based on attendance, not enrollment, making it difficult for early childhood education programs to create balanced budgets.
- This is an issue that has to be addressed, it has significant and real impact on families, families who are experiencing trauma or risk factors. Vulnerable children and families are often in precarious living situations which involve domestic violence, homelessness, DCF involvement and substance use. Having a stable child care slot is often the most therapeutic and a stabilizing force in these children's lives. We experience multiple instances where a child becomes involved with DCF and leaves the area temporarily or the mother is in flight from a domestic violence situation, or a family becomes homeless and couch surfs for a few weeks. When this happens, as a Parent Child Center, we always hold the slot for the child to return, which is best practice for child and family well being but is a tremendous financial burden on the program. Programs lose thousands of dollars when we hold a slot for a vulnerable child without receiving CCFAP payment. Many programs cannot afford to hold the slots due to the financial burden and losses, therefore these children do not have a child care program to return to.
- We know this can be done because it has been done, there is a process to pay programs based upon enrollment and on valid, active BFIS Certificates.
- This will help secure additional slots so that as the state's economy recovers, so that we have the slots we need as parents return to the workforce.
- We are currently being negatively impacted by irregular child attendance and closed days requirements because we have forced closures and unforeseen absences due to COVID.
- This would support closed teacher training and in-service days to support teachers' needs for training and maintaining staff wellness.