

FY23 Budget Hearing: Testimony - Amy Johnson, Director (Parent Child Center of Northwestern Counseling & Support Services - St. Albans, Vermont)

My name is Amy Johnson and I'm the Director of the Parent Child Center of Northwestern Counseling & Support Services. I am here today in support of increasing state funding for Parent Child Centers providing essential state services.

First, I would like to thank the legislature for their ongoing support of the PCC Network – I feel fortunate to live and raise a child in a state that recognizes the importance and true value of a network of family resource centers that support positive childhood experiences. Early experiences are an important public health issue that the PCCs are on the front lines addressing.

To continue to provide prevention-based supports and services and build healthy communities in our state, we are advocating for a base funding increase of \$1.5 million to the PCC line in the FY23 budget to help deliver our essential services. Underfunding has made providing all of the needed services to families a constant challenge. We are also asking for a second year of one-time funding (\$3.7 million across 15 PCCs) to address the growing needs of families with young children impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is critically important for Vermont families and communities that the services provided by PCCs are not only fully funded but of high quality and consistent across the state. An increase in funding will support the overall global health of the network by allowing for adequate funding of our prevention hub. An increase to our base funding will ensure that our state maintains a rich and robust network of family resource centers.

Investing in PCC's as critical primary prevention and upstream supports for families means that families will have the opportunity to access services and thus build on family strengths & enhance protective factors, which will stabilize children and families and reduce ACEs and the high costs associated with them.

The system exists to support families, and it is a robust one. We need to invest in the current system – we need to invest in the high-quality prevention work of PCCs. For Vermont families, PCCs are the answer.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Amy Johnson, MA
Director – Parent Child Center of NCSS

