

I'm a parent of two children in Wilmington. I'm writing to express my support of investing in Children's Integrated Services, which I have accessed through Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family Development.

My daughter, who is 15 months old, is currently engaged in direct instruction and intervention to support her motor development through Winston Prouty. She began receiving these services in the fall of 2021 when she wasn't progressing with crawling. She has made astonishing leaps and bounds through her work with her interventionist. She went from completely immobile to crawling with complete ease and is now working on learning to walk.

Prior to her work with early intervention, my child benefited from the help of a lactation consultant, whom we also connected with through Winston Prouty and who is covered under CIS's nursing umbrella. Those services made an immediate positive impact on my nursing relationship with my child and allowed me to breastfeed her for her full first year of life and beyond it.

Quite simply, my child would not be where she is today without the availability of CIS's services. As a parent, raising a child in rural Vermont is extremely challenging. We are far from most providers, there is a crisis of child care availability here, and the way our communities are laid out can be incredibly isolating for new parents — something that was exacerbated by the pandemic. It has been my continued experience that CIS is a partner for parents here, meeting parents and children where they are emotionally, developmentally, and often physically within the county, which is expansive.

I personally will forever be grateful for the services my child was able to access, the way her interventionist communicated with me and made me feel a part of the process, and the impact those services have had on her wellbeing. I am of firm belief that CIS is an absolute necessity in Windham County and throughout the state. It bridges gaps that would otherwise be insurmountable for some families and eases the challenges of parenting and raising children in rural, poor, and geographically challenging parts of the state.

I hope the Governor and the Legislature will fully fund CIS with a \$1.8 million increase so that the actual costs of providing these essential supports are covered.

Sincerely,

Lauren Harkawik  
Wilmington, Vermont