

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Sophia Donforth, and I'm the executive director of the Milton Family Community Center located in Milton, VT, which is one of 15 parent child centers across the state.

***I'm here to advocate for the Vermont Parent Child Center Network's request to increase our base funding by \$1.5 million for a total of \$4.8 million in the PCC line in the FY23 budget & also for a second-year of 3.7 million in one-time funding to address the needs of families with young children because of the COVID pandemic.***

Parent Child Centers are remarkable in that they do prevention and mitigation work simultaneously for Vermont's vulnerable families. The multi-generational approach to supporting families gives kids what they need to thrive, and partners with parents and caregivers to ensure they can better meet the needs of those children. In this way immediate needs are met, and the groundwork is laid for healthier and more resilient children and families. Families gain concrete supports, and isolation-busting connections.

In the past year my center has used our state funds to help families access food, diapers, safe housing for survivors of domestic violence, referrals for specialized support for children with special needs, strategies for coping with stress, information about child development, information about safe discipline for children, and coaching through 1-1 visits and support groups.

Another feature and focus of parent child centers is partnering WITH families to identify and build upon their strengths. This leads to parents and caregivers who advocate for themselves and others, set and meet their own goals, and come to be resources for others. This peer support is crucial to many families, and expands the reach and impact of PCC's.

This last part I know firsthand. As a longtime participant at the Janet S. Munt Family Room in Burlington, I received support in parenting my young children, and connected to a community that has helped me immeasurably during the challenges of toddlerhood, especially during a pandemic. The depth of support and connection helped me learn both the importance of creating it for others, and my ability to contribute in this arena, which is how I now find myself heading a different PCC in Milton. PCC's help parents and caregivers recognize their own worth, and support them to be their best selves, which is what all our children need.

In light of this important work, which is beneficial to all families and crucial to the success of future generations, ***please support the PCCN request to increase the base funding by \$1.5 million, as well as a second-year of 3.7 million in one-time funding to address pandemic needs.***

Thank you for listening.