



March 11, 2021

Sen. Sirotkin  
Chair, Senate Economic Development Committee  
Vermont State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Chair Sirotkin and Members of the Committee,

I recently learned of the proposal to add a dependent benefit to Vermont's Unemployment Insurance program, and am writing to express Voices' enthusiastic support for this provision in S.10.

One of Voices' primary policy objectives is to eliminate poverty and replace it with economic security for every child. There are multiple pathways to achieving this, but paid employment outside the home continues to be the preferred approach for policymakers. In a state like ours where so many jobs are in the low-wage service sector where labor is commodified, it's imperative that we scaffold supports around workers to protect them from income disruptions beyond their control. Especially those raising children, who will carry the impacts of childhood economic distress into adulthood.

Research shows that children who live in poverty have worse outcomes than their more affluent peers in terms of physical and mental health, cognitive development, school achievement and emotional well-being. They score lower on academic tests, complete fewer years of education, work less, and earn less than others. But it has been shown that even small [increases in family income](#) can improve outcomes.

Children have only one shot at a healthy, secure childhood that ensures they reach their full potential. The proposal to extend dependent benefits to UI recipients is a wise investment in the current and future wellbeing of Vermonters. I thank the committee for your work on enhancing unemployment benefits to reflect the realities of parents and caregivers and to give our kids the best chance at emerging from this challenging time with **their** futures still bright.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle B. Fay".

Michelle B. Fay, Executive Director