

**Donna Bailey, Parent Child Center Network
Testimony 14th January 2021**

My name is Donna Bailey, the co-chair of the PCC network and director of Addison County PCC. Thank you for inviting the PCC network here today.

Thank you for listening to the needs of the PCC network, and thank you for the COVID-19 Relief Funds that Mary just spoke to.

As a state we need to be thinking about COVID recovery and what is next. As we think about the children and families in our state, we need to look forward and ahead. As organizations, we need to think about long-term planning. We already operate on shoestring budgets, carving away at services to meet the ever-increasing demands on our services with less resources- increasingly, even before COVID, we found ourselves needing to do more with less. This situation is not sustainable.

As a state, it is time to look at the losses to funding and find new ways to support families and their children. We would like to submit a new request for any COVID funding that becomes available in 2021 so that a payment can go to each Parent Child Center to use independently as required. As a network, we are requesting \$3 million which translates to \$200,000 for each of the 15 PCC centers. We know we will need to track all funds, report on how they are spent, and relate all expenditures to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have shown that we can do that with this last round of funding.

As you can see, the COVID money we have been given to date has been utilized for very concrete, basic needs, making sure that families stay safe and whole during this very difficult time. There is breadth and depth in the work that PCCs do on a daily basis, providing holistic, wrap-around care to ensure the wellbeing of all our families and children. In addition to providing high quality childcare, food, and other basic needs, our multi-generational outreach services are broad, dealing with multiple issues, such as addressing homelessness, helping our families find jobs, or providing guidance with a new baby.

The broader vision is that we have seen our families and staff deal with the difficulty of needing to work and study from home, and the lack of broadband accessibility. Internet access has been an issue in both availability and affordability-even when families live where decent internet is available, they have not always been able to afford it. If we want all Vermonters to move forward, we need to make sure that broadband connectivity is accessible TO ALL Vermonters. The same can be said for our health care. All our staff have access to health care at the Addison County PCC, but we need to make sure this basic human right is accessible for all Vermonters.

Thank you for your support. The PCC network is working with Senators to have legislation introduced again this year which updates our statute, and adds financial supports. While this is not the reason we are here today, I want to say “out loud” that ongoing support helps us help all vulnerable Vermonters.

Letter from Sara Chicoine, staff member January 2020

I want to express my sincere appreciation for the energy and effort you put forth on behalf of the Addison County Parent Child Center. I find moments like the one I experienced **during our meeting** a visible example of your commitment to the staff of ACPCC and the children and families in our community. I recognize as a staff member during an unprecedented moment in our history, we are able to go the extra mile for our ACPCC families because we have a board and leadership who regularly go the extra mile for our staff.

A staff who hear they are valued, and also see and feel the ways we are valued, are able and willing to perform at the highest level possible. I could write a volume of examples, but I will focus on just the last several months.

I respect the process in which we have received the latest information regarding Covid-19 as soon as it is available, and how that information in turn changes guidance from our state leaders and affects decisions we make for our center. I value ACPCC leadership including the entire staff in synthesizing Covid-19 information and in decision making for our center.

I appreciate the thinking around equity and access in vaccine distribution. Further I am moved beyond words that regard for our own family is weighed when making decisions around how we can be the best support children and families in our community.

It has not gone unnoticed that at every possible turn, ACPCC leadership has been transparent around our goals and values and has stayed true to these goals and values in interactions with our community members, our PCC families and our staff. Lastly, the unwavering commitment to maintain salary and benefits at the pre-pandemic level has been the biggest gift during the global pandemic. To be spared financial hardship is something many Vermonters have not experienced. My most sincere thanks and gratitude to those who have kept our center open, saved our jobs, and allowed us to continue to do the work we love cannot be repaid with a simple thank you note. I understand this, and yet it is what I am moved to do in this moment. Please accept this note as the smallest token of my enormous gratitude.

Kindly,
Sara Chicoine

A mom with 5 children who all got winter gear:

You are the best! Everyone say to get outside but we can't if we do not have the right gear?! Then you came with the right gear. And nice stuff! This means so much to me and my family. You have no idea. My therapist is so happy because one of our goals was to spend time as a family outside and we can now.

Another dad:

I do not know what we would do with the PCC.