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Good Afternoon, my name is Claire Kendall, Co Director of the Family Center of Washington County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and thank you for your service on behalf of Vermonters.

I am asking for your support for the Parent Child Center Network FY 2024 Budget Request for an Increase in Base Funding for the PCC Integrated Grant by \$5.2million.

The Impact of Workforce Competition: The legislature supported an increase in base funding for FY2023 for the PCCs Integrated Grant, which is spread across the 15 Parent Child Centers to deliver services to all families with young children in Vermont. This increase has definitely made a difference for our families and also our staff. ***However, the decades of level underfunding prior to that year have caused significant challenges for paying our staff competitive wages.***

Our Request: Increase Base Funding to support our staff & the families we serve by Increasing the PCCN base funding by \$5.2 million which would get us to our goal of \$10 million statewide. ***This increase in PCC funding would allow the Parent Child Centers to increase wages and/or benefits to be competitive in the workforce marketplace so that families with young children can receive consistent, high-quality services and supports from people that they know and trust.***

This base funding increase request has been a long-standing request to bring PCC staff closer to parity with similar positions in the education and state sectors. Parent Child Centers provide supports and services to families with young children, and these supports and services are delivered by staff people. ***Because of decades of underfunding, the PCCs are not able to compete in the ever tighter workforce market,*** which creates situations where positions are not filled for long periods of time and/or they turnover frequently. ***Because these services require strong relationships with families over time, consistent and qualified staff people are important.*** Thus, increasing the funding for the Integrated PCC Grant, which funds the 8 Core Services that all 15 Parent Child Centers deliver on behalf of the state, is critical.

Parent Child Centers provide parents with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children. We work to strengthen families and communities across Vermont. During the pandemic PCCs made it our mission to continue providing critical supports to parents and children. PCCs act as hubs for families with young children, an actual place in the local community where families are always welcome and can get the support they need, regardless of economic or family status.

PCCs do more with less and prevent expensive problems down the road. Every dollar invested in building healthy communities saves future tax payer dollars and reduces the demand for our health care system and helps to ensure that more people will be healthier for longer periods of their lives. PCCs are the answer to helping families get the crucial support they need to build resiliency.

Healthy children and stable families result in strong and resilient communities across Vermont. PCCs build relationships with families before, during and after a crisis in their lives. Our multi-generational support is unique and has a proven track record. **Prevention work saves money.** PCC prevention programs and services ensure that parents have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to care for their children, we can strengthen families and the communities they live in.

Thank you again for your time today and for your dedication and service to the wellbeing of Vermonters.

Claire Kendall

Co Executive Director