

Hi, my name is Michelle Downing and I am a new full time Waterbury resident.

My family moved to VT full time in August, which was a six month process due to inability to find childcare. We were lucky to find an option we love, however it requires driving 120 miles a day and it closes before our workday is complete. We think every day about the emotional cost of driving 2 hours daily, the carbon footprint we are leaving and the impact to our careers, however we don't have any other option. Every childcare facility that is closer has dozens of families on wait lists because of the shortage of care that exists, and we cannot afford a different option.

Access to Childcare is imperative to our family's life as my husband and I both work full time jobs that require us to work traditional hours as well as travel about once a month. We are also mentally and emotionally fulfilled by our careers and need the dual income in order to support our family and create a stable environment at home. Fortunately, our workplaces have been flexible as we work through non-traditional work arrangements and frequent daycare closures, however most families are not this lucky.

Please support the Governor's proposed investment in the Child Care Financial Assistance Program in the FY 24 Budget as well as additional investments to support Vermont's children, families, early childhood educators and child care programs of all types. The state needs to improve access to and increase presence of childcare for all families in order to thrive. Thank you for your time today