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Hello. My name is Jill Bouton.

I am the Post Permanency worker for Bennington County. I have worked for Easterseals, in this position, for the past 10 years.

I am speaking tonight in support of increasing the base funding for Post Permanency Services Programs by \$300,000.

In my 10 years as a Post Permanency worker I have had the pleasure of working with many adoptive and kinship families. I have worked with families who have adopted internationally, families who have adopted through the Department of Children and Families, when biological family reunification was not possible, and I have worked with grandparents, who have become permanent guardians for their grandchildren.

I have sat at kitchen tables in tiny mobile homes in the most rural part of the county, tidy apartments in intown Bennington and single-family homes throughout the county. Whether working with a family of financial means or a grandmother on a fixed income; the common thread that ties most of these families together is caring for children who have experienced considerable early trauma.

Caring for a child not born to you and who experienced early trauma can be challenging. The child's behaviors can be misunderstood by child care providers, their schools, at times their mental health providers and quite often by extended family members. Families are usually working very hard to meet the needs of their children. The task can at times feel daunting and sometimes quite isolating. Post Permanency services works to partner with adoptive families and kinship families to address the critical needs of their children.

Bennington is not a resource rich community. Mental health agencies' availability is often not commensurate with the needs of the families they serve. Schools are often neither adoption informed or trauma informed. Post Permanency is often the service that provides an affirming message to families ("yes, we can help"). This collaboration is often critical in advocating for and achieving the services necessary for a child to experience repair from early childhood trauma.

Knowing how important it has been for families to have access to necessary support and resources, I would again speak to the importance of increasing the base funding for Post Permanency Services Programs by \$300,000.