

Dear Members of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

Hello, my name is Christine Mitchell Adams and I'm a resident of Shelburne, VT. I am a mom of a 5 year old and a marketing consultant for small businesses. I'm writing to express my concern about the proposal to reallocate funding intended for child care. Too often young children and working parents are forgotten or deprioritized.

When we learned I was pregnant, my husband and I immediately toured centers and got on 4 waiting lists at child care centers in the Burlington area. Months passed. I checked in regularly, but there were no anticipated openings for when we'd need it. The day after my emergency cesarean I received an email from one of the child care centers. I read it lying in my hospital bed, already deep in anxiety due to post op and hypertension. The center only had capacity to offer two days of care and it was before my son would be 3 months old. I asked if he could start later and if more days would open up. Their response was that it was the only spot and if I didn't take it, it was likely I would lose the opportunity to have child care there. I immediately replied—we'll take it. My son was in child care at 2.5 months old, sooner than we had hoped. And with only 2 days, I had to work while caring for him the other 3 days. I worked late at night while I should have been sleeping and healing. I worked weekends when I should have been with my family. We don't have family nearby and hiring a nanny was not an affordable option for us (my entire salary would have gone to that employment). And we never heard from the other child care centers we were on waiting lists with.

When I hear the stories of many parents, I recognize the immense privilege I had because of my flexibility. We made it work, despite the anxiety and stress. Most parents don't have flexibility. A 2 day spot doesn't work for their jobs. And they don't have the luxury to wait or support to piece it together.

Parents should have the choice of child care they need. I have friends who are pulling out of their savings because they can't afford childcare for two kids while both parents work full time. I have friends who are one of the many families who have benefitted from the expansion of CCFAP, relieving immense stress and financial strain on their households. Since Act 76 began rolling out, new child care programs have opened and over 1,000 new child care spaces have been created.

My son is in preschool at Heartworks in Shelburne and has loved it. Every one of his teachers has made a huge impact on him and his development. We still keep in touch with one of his teachers who has since moved away. Early education teachers should have salaries and opportunities that match their immense contribution and value.

I am asking that you please use every dollar from Act 76 for its intended purpose: solving Vermont's child care crisis. We need to continue to invest in our children, our families, and our early childhood educators.

I am grateful to the members committee for reading my testimony, and their time in consideration.

Thank you.
Christine

