

I'm Rebecca, a mom of two living in Burlington. I'm writing as a parent to express my concern about the Administration's proposal to reallocate child care funding as part of the FY26 State Budget.

Last year, my husband and I paid \$45,000 for child care for our two young children. That equated to \$3,800 per month—two thirds of our take home salary. It was completely unaffordable. Without help, I would've forfeited my career and livelihood.

My husband and I both work long shifts. But the child care program our first child attended closed so often due to staffing shortages, that we had to both drop to part-time in our professions and instead pick up second jobs that allowed more flexibility.

The program we enrolled our second child in was only able to offer a spot if we enrolled our daughter earlier than we'd anticipated. Because of this, we had no choice but to start her in child care at nine weeks old. Just a few months ago, I prepared to resign and remove our kids from their programs — child care was too expensive.

My last hope was Act 76, which expanded the income eligibility for child care tuition assistance, helping more Vermont families like ours access lower child care costs. Our application was approved in November. **We now pay \$1,500 per month for child care for our two children — \$17,000 for the year — and it's made all the difference.** We can live within our means again and can afford to pay for other necessities.

We're so glad we don't have to remove our kids from child care. They're now 3 and 2 years old. My son receives specialist services through his program, and it's working well for him. My daughter loves playing with her friends and enjoys the arts and crafts. I appreciate that they're both getting quality early education and excellent care.

There's still work left to do though. Act 76 has helped 1,900 Vermont families newly access tuition assistance – but thousands more still need help. Meanwhile, programs benefit from increased state reimbursements, which provide stability and allow them to keep their doors open. But there still aren't child care spaces for all the families who need care. The current FY26 budget proposal from the Governor's Administration would undercut the child care progress our state is making. It's critical that we use every dollar from Act 76 for its intended purpose—to solve Vermont's child care crisis.

Thank you for your time and consideration.