

I'm Erica Harris, a mom of two living in Vergennes. Two years ago, I stood on the State House lawn at the Courage to Care Rally, urging legislators to pass one of the most comprehensive child care bills in the nation. At the time, I was pregnant with my second child. My daughter is now about to turn a year old, and my son is now three.

Now, I am writing to express my disapproval of the proposal to reallocate child care funding to non-related government expenses as part of the FY2026 State Budget. This is funding we fought hard to secure for Vermont families, and it is working as intended.

Act 76 made our transition to a four-person family more manageable by expanding the income eligibility for child care tuition assistance. **We now pay a third of the cost to have both of our kids in a safe, caring, and educational environment full-time.** Without the expansion, it would've made financial sense for one of us to leave the workforce and stay home with our two children.

I'm so proud that Vermont is leading on child care—since Act 76 began rolling out, 90 new child care programs have opened and 1,000 new child care spaces have been created.

But we still have a long way to go to fully solve our state's child care crisis. When I look around our Vergennes neighborhood, I see a lot of young families doing their best to balance work and child care. The impacts of Act 76 aren't felt by everyone yet, and many families still can't access child care. As parents with young kids, there will always be hurdles to overcome but Act 76 certainly makes our lives a little bit easier. I want this for all families.

That's why it's so critical to continue fixing our child care system – not risk the progress we've fought so hard for. Please protect child care funding in the FY26 budget and continue to invest in our children, our families, and our early childhood educators.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Commented [SK1]: Could there be another line here to say "The impacts of Act 76 aren't being felt by everyone yet, and many families still can't access child care"?