

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Kate and I live in Williston with my husband and three children five and under. We both work full time while our children attend an amazing childcare center in Williston.

I'm writing to express my concern about the proposal to reallocate funding intended for child care.

We moved to Vermont in 2020 during the peak of the COVID pandemic so my husband could attend medical school at UVM, where he is now a resident physician. We were fortunate to find a childcare spot for our infant, and despite the many pandemic-related interruptions with our childcare, we were able to manage. Like many schools and employers, ours offered additional flexibility given the unprecedented times.

Fast forward to 2025, and while we're no longer in a global pandemic, our childcare center experiences frequent classroom closings due to insufficient staffing. We've had three days in the past few weeks alone where I've had a child at home due to staffing constraints and we are often dropping off late and picking up early to ensure that classrooms can be open. I appreciate that as a parent to young children, there will be sick days and snow days but closures due to being short staffed have tapped out my flexibility at work. I'm concerned that the time will come when I will need to leave the workforce - not because I don't have childcare, but because it is so often disrupted. While the childcare staffing challenges from the pandemic remain, the flexibility for working parents to address them has dissolved.

My children's educators are central to our community and enable my husband to treat patients at the hospital and for me to provide for my family. Despite their critical role, they are underpaid and undervalued. Of all college graduates nationwide, early childhood educators earn the least. I believe this is why it has been so difficult to attract talented teachers and to staff our center at a levels where we can be confident and count on them to be open the days we expect.

Our state's employers and our economy depend on employees being able to show up to work, and many working Vermonters with young children rely on child care to make that happen. Without early childhood educators,

everything falls apart. It is important to continue investing in our child care system and our child care workforce.

Act 76 has provided relief to many families and programs but the work isn't done. Please use every dollar from Act 76 for its intended purpose by continuing to invest in our children, families and especially, our early childhood educators. Without it, the acute stressors on families like mine due to unplanned closures because of staffing constraints will continue.

Thank you so much for taking the time to consider my comments.

Kate