

Written Testimony in Support of Restoring Funding for Post Permanency Services

Submitted by: Anna Walls, Adoptive Parent

Thank you for the opportunity to share my family's story and to speak in support of maintaining full funding for Vermont's Post Permanency Support Program (PPSP).

Our Family's Experience with Post Permanency Services

In 2014, I was 27 years old and living with my partner of four years. We were in the early stages of building a life together—figuring out our careers, our finances, and whether we could afford to stay in Vermont long term, let alone grow a family.

Overnight, everything changed.

We received a call that my husband's half-brother's children were going to enter state custody. At the time, one child was just three months old, and the other was five. There was hope that family could step in to support them. With the help of my husband's mother and stepfather, and with critical support from Lund, we worked together to bring these children into our care.

Over the next three years, we navigated an incredibly complex system: visitation schedules, emotional and behavioral challenges, early childhood trauma, school systems, caseworkers, interstate agreements, and court processes. In 2017, we finalized our kinship adoption.

While adoption brought permanence, it did not bring an end to challenges. In many ways, it was just the beginning.

How Specialized Support Helps Families Navigate Complex Needs

As young parents, we were profoundly underprepared for the emotional, behavioral, and systemic challenges that come with kinship adoption—particularly adoption involving trauma, loss, and disrupted early attachments. We were raising children with needs far beyond typical parenting experiences, while also trying to maintain jobs, a marriage, and our own mental health.

This is where post permanency services became essential.

Lund was our first call, and they showed up—consistently and compassionately. Post permanency services helped us:

- Advocate for our children within the education system
- Understand trauma-informed parenting strategies
- Navigate financial stressors and access appropriate supports

- Learn how to work within child-serving systems rather than being overwhelmed by them
- Access and connect with specialized community resources
- Maintain stability at moments when we were close to crisis

These services were not one-time interventions. They were sustained, relationship-based supports that evolved alongside our children's needs at each new developmental stage.

What Aspects of the Program Have Been Most Meaningful

The most meaningful aspect of post permanency support has been **continuity and relationship**. We were not starting from scratch every time something went wrong. We worked with professionals who understood our family, our children's history, and the complex realities of kinship adoption.

Lund's support felt less like a program and more like a lifeline—one grounded in expertise, trust, and deep understanding of adoptive and guardianship families. They reminded us that asking for help did not mean we were failing—it meant we were doing what was necessary to preserve our family.

Even with these services, our journey has been extraordinarily challenging. I can say with certainty that **without post permanency support, I do not believe we would have been able to meet our children's needs or keep our family stable**.

Why Supporting PPSP Is Good Policy

Post permanency services are not optional supports—they are a critical component of Vermont's child welfare continuum.

Families like mine step forward to keep children connected to family and community. Without adequate, predictable support, these placements are at risk. When adoptions or guardianships destabilize, the cost—financially and emotionally—falls back on the state through increased involvement in child welfare, mental health systems, special education, and healthcare.

Lund, alongside Easterseals Vermont and Northeastern Family Institute, provides statewide services that:

- Prevent placement disruptions
- Preserve permanent homes
- Reduce long-term system costs
- Support some of Vermont's most vulnerable children

A 25.5% reduction in Medicaid funding threatens the availability, duration, and timeliness of these services. The consequences—longer waitlists, shorter service durations, and

increased pressure on DCF and the mental health system—are not hypothetical. They will be felt by families across Vermont.

Closing

Investing in post permanency support is an investment in stability, prevention, and long-term fiscal responsibility. It ensures that children who have already endured trauma are not subjected to further disruption—and that families who step up are not left to navigate these challenges alone.

I respectfully urge the legislature to:

- Restore Medicaid funding to FY26 levels
- Ensure predictable, sustainable funding for PPSP

Post permanency services preserved my family. I ask you to help ensure they remain available to the hundreds of Vermont families who need them now and in the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.