

## **House Appropriations Testimony - March 12, 2015**

**Submitted by: Scott Johnson, Lamoille Family Center, Morrisville VT**

**RE: DCF CDD – Waiting for Child Care (CCFAP)**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on the “Ugly Budget” and specifically the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP). I appreciate your commitment to an open and inclusive process as you craft a complex and very difficult state budget.

Before I share my concerns about the wait list, however, I would like to note that neither the Governor’s recommended budget nor the “Ugly Budget” list of potential additional cuts meet the purpose outlined in state statute for the state budget – not just in terms of the CCFAP, but across the board, the proposals on the table will not result in addressing *“the needs of the people of Vermont in a way that advances human dignity and equity.”* (Title 32, chapter 5a)

I am writing to specifically respond to and oppose a potential “wait list” or “freeze” for the CCFAP, which would effectively cap the number of children and families that could be served by this program. The CCFAP ensures that Vermont’s working families have access to quality child care and helps those most in need. For these families, waiting means lost work, lost pay and potentially lost jobs. It may also mean that their children end up in care that is not high quality and may put a child at risk.

The VT Early Childhood Alliance’s 2015 legislative platform includes: *Increase funding to keep eligibility current with 2015 FPL and adequately fund the reimbursement rates to account for the increasing number of both programs participating in STARS and families utilizing high quality programs.*

This is an important goal to ensure that Vermont’s working families continue to have access to quality child care. Access to child care achieves the stated purpose of the budget *“to promote economic well-being among the people of Vermont, and foster a vibrant economy.”* (Title 32, chapter 5b)

We have not had a CCFAP wait list for twenty years, and putting a wait list in place is a big step backward. It is not only a budget decision - it is a policy decision. It is the antithesis of assuring every family/child who needs child care, has access to high quality/affordable child care. It is one more hit on Vermont’s working families and makes raising the threshold for child care financial assistance eligibility even more of a stretch.

*“The rate of return for investment in quality early childhood education is 7-10% per annum through better outcomes in education, health, sociability, economic productivity and reduced crime.”*

*Professor James Heckman - American [economist](#) and [Nobel laureate](#)*