

Good Morning Senators

Thank you for the opportunity to come speak with you about the Parent Child Center bill S.263. My name is Margot Holmes and I am the Executive Director of the Springfield Area Parent Child Center.

This PCC bill is an exciting opportunity to support the continuum of prevention in our state. PCCs have programs that are placed throughout the prevention continuum but we focus heavily on the true prevention work to provide the most widespread support to all children and families in our state. Doing this work has many rewards and we hear a lot of great feedback from the families we work with every day. The unique nature of Parent Child Centers has allowed us to develop naturally in each of our respective communities. We have been able to respond to changing needs and adapt our programming to partner best in each specific community. This is why families speak well of our programs – because we have spent time listening to them and developing programs that meet their needs. These kinds of activities have been documented around the country as some of the best practices for these community-based hubs of support because it allows the fluidity needed in each community rather than creating a prescriptive approach that may not actually serve a community well.

We have a lot of information to support the success and benefit of Parent Child Center programs. But often we are asked for more specifics and two questions often arise, How do we know we are doing quality work? And How do we share with others what that quality work looks like?

This is where the Nationally-Adopted Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support come in. These Standards operationalize the Principles of Family Support Practice and the research-based, evidence-informed 5 Protective Factors of the Strengthening Families Approach. There are five sections of the standards, Family Centeredness, Family Strengthening, Embracing Diversity, Community Development, and Evaluation. These sections are broken down into specific quality indicators that programs can use to identify what they are currently doing in these different areas and gives them an opportunity and examples of how to create an action plan to increase the quality of their programs. The first step in aligning each PCC with these standards is for each program to conduct a robust self-assessment. In Springfield we have already put together a multi-disciplinary team of parents, staff, board members, and leadership to start discussing our practices and align our program with the Standards of Quality. This team has already started identifying for our organization specifically, ways that we can elicit more feedback from our parent participants on how to shape and develop our programs, how to ensure we are advertising ourselves effectively, and how to create a Parent Advisory Committee.

Imbedding these Standards into our work within the Parent Child Centers will allow us to demonstrate how we provide quality services to children and families and create a process to ensure that families continue to be our active partners in the development and continuation of quality programs. The PCC Network has adopted a plan to integrate the Standards within every PCC by the end of 2021.

The PCC bill S.263 supports integrating these National Standards of Quality into the foundational structure of the PCCs, creates consistency and accountability throughout the state and establishes the Parent Child Centers as the high quality hubs of supports for children and families that we have been for decades.

Thank you