

My name is Megan Carswell and I am a developmental educator for the Early Intervention Program serving Chittenden County. I am joining you today to speak to some of the issues that children and families are facing in our state and to voice my support for an increase in funding to strengthen Children's Integrated Services (CIS).

I would first like to thank you all for allowing me to join today and for your ongoing support of the CIS system. I have been working directly with families for over 6 years and have seen firsthand the benefits that these services have on our youngest and most vulnerable Vermonters.

To continue providing quality on-going supports and services within our community, we are advocating for an increase of \$1.8 million to bring it to \$13.3 million for FY23. We are also seeking a one-time investment of federal pandemic relief funds of roughly \$1.6 million for a statewide data reporting platform.

The strain that the pandemic has had on our system as well as on the families we serve is tangible in all areas of our service provision. As a home visitor, I observe and experience these challenges from all sides. Young children in need of services are unable to be supported by their childcares and parents, isolated from personal support systems, are treading water at home. Without adequate programming, children are slipping through the cracks and parents are left feeling defeated.

Investing in this critical work not only allows for direct support for families, but also early prevention leading to long term positive outcomes and a reduction in costs down the line. An increase in funding will allow more families to have access to a strong system of support in a time where it is crucial.

The CIS system was created to help families in Vermont thrive. Without proper funding, the quality of services and access to them will only dwindle. Now, more than ever, this is vital work.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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