



To: House Committee on Appropriations

Re: Waiting for Childcare - Funding Early Care and Education CCFAP

From: Cinda Morse, Executive Director

Date: 3/10/2105

As I am unable to appear in person to testify at your hearing on March 12th, please accept these comments as written testimony related to the subject of Waiting for Child Care – Funding for the Child Care Financial Assistance Program.

All of us who come here to testify before this committee understand that there is not enough money to do what we have been doing in the way we have been doing it. We are all hoping to convince you that what each of us is doing is so important that you will not cut our program. I am no exception. I want to convince you that creating a waiting list for childcare because you believe you cannot fund the need is shortsighted, undermines a fragile economy, and undermines both men and women who need to work to support their families. I also believe you will only be moving what you pay out from childcare subsidies to other benefit programs and will not in fact actually save any money. Underfunding CCFAP by creating a waiting list will frustrate employers who want to hire people but can't because the potential employee while eligible in on a waiting list for childcare. This will jeopardize Vermont's fragile economic recovery by leaving jobs unfilled and reducing tax revenues. Meanwhile the families eligible for subsidized childcare but on a waiting list will more than likely be receiving other benefits from the state including food stamps, economic support, housing support and fuel support. Underfunding CCFAP will not save any money and will in fact cost more than the subsidized childcare.

As a Vermont taxpayer who would probably be effected, I urge you to raise taxes to make adequate funding for CCFAP possible.

I know your challenge at this time is to resolve a pressing budget shortfall. Nonetheless, I would also like to ask you to find a time to consider the following: You have the opportunity to be proactive and allocate resources so that you change this discussion entirely. You already know that extensive research both in Vermont and in the nation indicate that investing in quality early care and education programming for young children pays dividends in lower special education costs, higher graduation rates, higher post-secondary school success, and lower prison populations. Currently 27.2% of the budget goes to public education and 9.6 % goes to corrections. Out of a 1.4 Billion dollar budget this is a lot of money. If indeed we believe that early care and education can make a difference, let's fund it. Reallocating just 5% of these funds at 1%/year over the next 5 years would change the conversation and actually save money in lower special education costs now and lower prison costs later. Can we really afford to not do this now??? Indeed if we do not start to be proactive, the problems Vermont faces will only grow and the limited resources we have to deal with them will only be less effective. You could start the process of making a difference and change the conversation from what we can't do to what we can do.