



August 12, 2014

Dear Representative Health and Joint Fiscal Committee members,

On behalf of the children and families we serve, I am writing to implore you to rethink the timeline and process for consideration of the proposed cuts to the FY 15 budget. I feel it is imperative that you have more time and information before you as you consider such difficult choices. To hold a public hearing less than 24 hours after the presentation of the proposed rescissions and to take a vote the very next day seems out of alignment with what I have known to be a well-informed and deliberate legislative process when funding decisions of this magnitude are before our dedicated legislators.

As a family support and advocacy organization, we have had many opportunities to observe the legislature wrestle with essential policy and budgetary concerns. We are well aware that there are difficult choices to be made, and want to be certain that those choices are well-informed by the perspective of the Vermonters they will impact. We believe that some of the recommended cuts are inconsistent with the stated priorities of Vermont's leaders, including improvements in child welfare, prevention and early intervention, substance and mental health treatment. With so much focus on results-accountability and better outcomes for Vermont's individuals, children, and families, we feel that your time would be well-spent in gaining a deeper understanding of the choices before you. We are concerned about balancing the budget at the expense of some of our most vulnerable citizens. We would truly appreciate more clarity as to why these cuts are necessary at this time. Vermont Family Network feels that your Committee owes the people of Vermont, including your colleagues in the House and Senate, a reasonable amount of time to make our case for supporting the budget adopted by the full legislature.

I truly appreciate your service to Vermont, and your consideration of this important plea.

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pam McCarthy".

Pam McCarthy, President/CEO