



**Raise Reach Up Campaign Presentation
Early Childhood Day at the Legislature 2021
March 10, 2021**

Reach Up Proposals & Message Frames

1. Direct the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to work with VT State Housing Authority (VSHA) to certify Reach Up households' eligibility for emergency rental assistance.

Opportunity: An influx of COVID emergency rental assistance for the next 18 months means that most RU households will have access to housing help. Given that only about a quarter of RU families live in subsidized housing, and the RU housing allowance is a fraction of fair market rent, we should streamline RU eligibility for COVID rental assistance.

Impact:

- Reduce barriers to securing or retaining housing for the most economically disadvantaged families.
- Reduce housing transitions and periods of childhood homelessness, which are linked to poor health, education and earnings outcomes into adulthood.

2. Use current cost of living figures to determine the standard of need for RU grants.

Opportunity: The Reach Up program has only had one cost of living increase in the past 20 years, and supports fall far short of meeting children's basic needs. Diminishing investment in the program means that the percentage of families in poverty who are served by Reach Up has fallen to only 49%.

Impact: When we improve family economic stability the effects are wide-ranging. Children do better in school, have better physical and mental health, and see higher earnings as adults. When parents get the job training and basic income they need it provides a solid foundation parenting and allows them to contribute to their community.

3. Stipulate that if additional funds become available, they be applied to increasing grants to families even if it is only for the duration of the COVID emergency. (for all the reasons above)

Responding to Pushback and Misinformation

Bridge from common objections with value-based, solution-focused statements:		
<i>When they say...</i>	<i>Pivot to...</i>	<i>Value</i>
One-time funds cannot be used to establish ongoing program investments	We should be applying resources that are currently available to meet current needs. There are 5,000 children living in deep poverty. They only get to be children once – now – and we have the opportunity to support their security, health and economic mobility for a lifetime.	Prevention, Potential, Child Wellbeing, Security
Increasing benefits reduces the incentive to work	Scarcity interferes with people’s ability to engage in long-range planning. We can’t expect parents to plan for their future when every moment of the day is spent struggling to survive. Study after study has found that meeting basic needs is the first step to family economic mobility.	Opportunity, Potential
But what about the other programs that help low-income Vermonters...are they really that bad off?	Even receiving the maximum benefit from programs like 3SquaresVT (nutrition), fuel assistance, etc. families receiving Reach Up are living well below the federal poverty level. A boost in direct financial assistance gives families needed flexibility to use the income in the ways that best help their household. This means rent, diapers, medicine, clothing, bus fare, school supplies, utility payments, car repairs, and more.	Security, Flexibility, Mobility