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My name is Peter Irving, I am the single parent of three children who all grew up in childcare out of necessity.

Our family suffered in the financial crisis suffering the loss of our family home our life savings and with the stress of this, a mental health crisis. Our family's internal support system was torn apart.

As a newly single parent I had to work and placing my children in care, unfortunately the cost of daycare for three, was more than my total income.

I was faced with not working, homelessness and supporting three kids in the middle of that path, or the loss of my children to social services for not being able to provide for them.

I was fortunate at this point to be directed towards ERDC. I applied and was accepted. This allowed my children to attend daycare, my responsibility was to find a way to make the copay.

ERDC allowed my children to get regular meals and the support of the teachers at their daycare. My children grew in the emotional support of the teachers and classmates that they engaged with, they were encouraged and challenged.

The effect of this support did not end at the daycare door. I was able to grow as a parent for my babies.

I was able to go to work and know that when I went to pick up my kids the staff would interact with me in a way that made me be proud of being a parent and not ashamed of my circumstances.

Having ERDC as you can see made the difference for our family, however the copay has a significant impact on us. We live in subsidized housing, my rent is 52% of my income and then the copay is significant amount of the money I have left. For this reason I am in support of an increase in the funding and an expansion of the qualifying means test.

Most families who qualify for ERDC are multiple benefit recipients. Our family receives Foodstamps, and Medicaid insurance for the children. As I work towards self sufficiency the transition out of using these benefits is extremely harsh. In my last review I was \$100 dollars over the threshold for foodstamps, so we lost our \$300 a month food benefits and my ERDC copay rose to \$700 a month.

Our budget for food was gone and my capacity to meet the increase in copay was impossible. The stress of consistently being unable to meet these basic needs has real health impacts on myself as the sole provider for these children. For this reason I would support an increase in the funding and an broadening of the criteria for ERDC recipients.

I want to finish by saying that I am so appreciative that you spend time working on and supporting this issue. My family is thankful that we have had the opportunities provided by ERDC funding. Thank you for your time to hear my story.