

**Appropriations Committee
December 9**

Testimony in support of the Nurturing Families Network

My name is Jessica Freibott and I am here to speak as a parent participating in Nurturing Families Network.

Prior to having my daughter I spent my adult life feeling that I didn't want to bring a child into this terrible world. I never felt good enough and everyone put me down. I felt like a failure.

My mother did the best she could but I know that my life would have been better if she had had the same support I find in Nurturing Families Network. I came out of my past growing up in psychiatric and residential facilities. Seven months before I got pregnant I was in a coma following a suicide attempt. I had hit my rock bottom. When I got pregnant I knew that if I was a failure my daughter would be, too, if I didn't change. The changes I have been able to make come from the education, support, and emotional connection from Nurturing Families.

When I got pregnant I was scared and devastated. I wanted a baby but I wanted a good life for my child. I wasn't sure I could provide that. I saw my therapist and asked for help in being the best parent I could be. I wanted my child to turn out so much better than me. One of the places I was referred to was a Nurturing Families Parenting Group. That group made me feel I was with others just like me. I felt so connected to those people. We got insight to our children, we could talk to each other, and we got personal support from each other and our group leader, Renee. I was fortunate to have this during my pregnancy and in the beginning of my daughter's life. I have also been involved in Nurturing Families Home Visiting since I was seven months pregnant. The thought that I could have this support until my child is five years old is such a comfort. I have learned so much about my daughter's development. I had no idea what was normal. There were things I was afraid of. I have been around lots of children but never had the experience of a miserable teething baby. I wasn't sure how to handle sleeping issues. Noreen sat with me one day while I learned to let Mikayla cry and settle herself down for two very long minutes. Not only did I learn to do it but I learned why it was good for me and my baby.

I don't feel like a failure anymore. I have a happy, healthy baby girl who is developing right on track. She's beautiful – the joy of my life. I get a lot of positive feedback about my parenting and my daughter from Noreen and Nurturing Families, my pediatrician, my therapist, even people on the street.

Please keep Nurturing Families Network in the budget for our state and its families. If I didn't have their support I would probably have the authorities in my life and my daughter might not be with me today.

Jessica Freibott
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