

Good evening Representative Walker & Senator Bye and Members of the Appropriation Committee

I am Ashley Figuenick, I am a mother of a 22 month old little girl. I left high school at the end of my junior year. I was not successful in high school because I was bullied about how I looked, how I dressed and who I hung out with.

After I had my child, I had post-partum depression. I was in an abusive relationship with my daughter's father. I had to get out of it. On top of that my daughter's father took her away from me because he did not want me to have her.

I did not know what to do until my old high school guidance counselor told me about Even Start, which is a program for moms and dads who didn't finish high school and want to be successful and good parents.

At first I didn't have my daughter, but the Even Start social worker and program manager helped me fight for her and gave me strength to get my daughter back.

My daughter and I go to school every day together. She goes to her early education classroom. I started at adult education by attending Basic Education classes until I was able to test into the High School Completion Program.

I think it is very important for Hailey and I to be going to school together because it makes her grow and learn while at the

same time I can be successful in my goals and dreams . I always know my child is in a safe environment while I am in class getting my education. Plus, I get to spend time interacting with my little girl every day in her classroom. I am learning about child development and how she is growing through developmental stages.

I am also learning about what I can do to help my little girl be successful. Things like being patient, being strong for her, speaking up for her and giving her security and love.

If I wasn't in this program I wouldn't have the opportunity to go to school to learn and neither would my daughter . I don't know what we would be doing.

I am asking for the Even Start program to be extended to other places around the state so that other moms and dads can be provided the same opportunities that I have in Even Start.

I want my daughter to have a successful education and to know that if I can do it, she can too!

Thank you for your time