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Bill Monson: Okay, well thank you for having me here. My name is Bill Monson, and I first got involved with the Early Head Start program in about 2004. I've had three children go through the program. The first one was Harley, then Kyla, and my youngest daughter, Jordan. And I really have enjoyed the bond that I've got with TLC and how they've tried to help the whole family become successful. And my kids are so close in age that even if the one child was not actually enrolled in the program, they was willing to not just help one child, but the whole family as a whole.

'Cause one was going through a difficulty and the other was trying to learn at the same time, or vice versa. And my wife, Toni, has been on Policy Council off and on since 2004, and we've -- when we first started down in around Brigham City and Logan, Utah -- and that was the Bear River area of the Early Head Start program, and that's when she very first got on the Policy Council. And I didn't quite really get involved with the Policy Council or anything like that. I was more involved with the children getting a better lifestyle than what I grew up with.

'Cause I firmly believe that children -- not just mine, but all children of the next generation growing up deserve better than what we had. And if we are available of the knowledge, it's very important for parents to try and seek that out. And the best way to seek it out is by the word of mouth. Due to medical conditions, we had to move further down south in Utah and I live now in St. George, Utah. And my daughter Jordan is on -- in the program right now, and they helped us as well. When we moved down here, we were classified as what was homeless.

We didn't actually live out on the streets or anything, but we lived with friends. So they helped us, you know, get into our own place by using vouchers for clothing and furniture, as well. And my wife got back on the Policy Council for the Washington area, as far as the counties. And I'd seen how she was getting really excited, more of them wanting to know more knowledge of what -- how it ran down there in the Bear River area versus here. So we became a very important knowledge, I guess, base of how they did down there versus up here.

And I also got on the Policy Council. This will be my second year. And being on the Policy Council, it was really neat to learn more of the ins and outs how the program actually works. We're allowed to be able to vote how the grants are spent and try to voice our opinions on the best way to spend it for the children's benefit, not mainly the parents 'cause it is the children that they are designed to help. And that's what I really love about the program. And sadly, my daughter's going to graduate out so I won't be on the Policy Council anymore.

But I've been on a lot of other committees -- planning committee, budget committee, doing the bylaws. And what the bylaws are is -- they are the guidelines of how we run the program in order for us to keep the grants and be able to get new grants. Now we have a very wonderful lady that works at -- with TLC, her name is Debbie Justice and she's the director. That woman does not get paid enough for all the work she does. She's the main one that writes the grants to go out there for funding to keep this going.

'Cause sadly enough, without the funding, it'd disappear, and Lord knows I don't want it to disappear. So -- the main thing that I could tell you about parent involvement is be there for your child in order that you can all grow positively through your trials and tribulations that you're dealing with; and get on the Policy Council, that way you can have a voice of what's going to be done for them, not only your child but the children. And I really appreciate you allowing me to take time to speak to you guys.

Jarma Wrighten: We really appreciate having you here, and you said so much. I think you pretty much did a great job summing up having the voice. And so what advice would you give to fathers about becoming involved in Head Start as a final thought? Bill: Oh, that the fathers just try and be in the child's life as much as possible, 'cause you're more important in different stages of their life than we really, truly understand until you're told. And if you're not told, you won't know. And once you do know that knowledge, grab onto that knowledge and use it to the best interest of raising

your children.

Jarma: Well, we're certainly pleased to have you, and we thank you for sharing your testimony today. And we look forward to your continued support in Head Start because you never really leave; and you can always come back a community rep, and we certainly would be happy and honored to have you because it's...

Bill: I would love to do that, the only sad thing about this program is there's only allowed three years in your lifetime to be in their program, whether it's on the Policy Council or the community rep. But, like you were saying, the children don't ever just disappear. The good thing about it, there's a status quo of how they keep doing even after they leave the program.

And I'd also like to add that I'm a graduate of Head Start myself, and that was back in the early '70s. And I've got personal disabilities that I really won't go into right now, but if I can make it, I know our other children can too and they'll be okay.

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