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September 2021

Dear Town Manager Poore -

On behalf of the Center for Grieving Children's (the Center) board, volunteers, and children and families from your community, I am writing to request utilizing American Rescue Plan funds to support the Center's efforts helping families process their grief, which has only been magnified by the pandemic. The Center's mission is to provide a safe space, loving peer support, outreach, and education to grieving children, teens, families and the community. Offering services for free, for as long as needed, **\$20,000 will provide one year of peer support groups for 40 individuals, equivalent to the number of children and families from your community who have benefited from Center peer support groups in recent years.**

Since their beginning in 1987, the Center has grown from serving four families with twelve volunteers, to becoming a trusted resource in Maine, and a national leader in the field of children's grief support. The Center is the ONLY Maine organization providing year-round peer support in a family model, as studies show that the better parents cope, the more successful children are. Last fiscal year, 621 individuals benefited from Center peer support groups. One participant describes the "magic" that Center peer support groups create below:

"There's no place that I'd rather cry than in my group with these people that surround me, and the facilitators that are there with me. In any of those really hard moments, they, and the other people in my group, just listen and give me comfort. Sometimes they don't have to say anything, and other times, they give ideas on how to deal with what I'm feeling, or a way to help me navigate something that maybe doesn't even have to do with the passing of my daughter. There are things that would add stress to my life, on top of this enormous grief. At times it feels like it starts to pile on, so they really help me in all aspects of my life and I never really expected that. It surprised me."

Covid-19 has impacted how families grieve, what they are grieving, and how the Center meets their needs. While there are certainly families coping with the loss of loved ones due to Covid-19, during this past year, traumatic events seemingly unrelated to the virus also occurred, if not increased, wreaking havoc on families in our community. Maine's Attorney General's Office reported a 33% increase in deaths caused by overdose compared to 2019. Rates of anxiety and depression have tripled, increasing death by suicide events. Grief did not take a hiatus during the pandemic. In fact, it was magnified in ways we have never seen.

American Rescue Plan funds are intended to help all of us recover from COVID-19's impact and my hope is that you recognize that ensuring your community properly processes grief is a way to prevent future societal costs that we will all incur. I invite you to continue reading to learn more about the Center's history, transition to continue serving families during COVID-19, future plans, and their financial stability that makes this organization a truly impactful avenue to funnel a small portion of American Relief Funds into. The need for Center services will only continue to grow in the upcoming years for Maine families and communities struggling with the long-term impact of their grief frozen in time as a result of Covid-19.

I look forward to the opportunity to connect with you, and am grateful for your consideration in supporting the Center's critical work to hold a safe place for your grieving families.

Sincerely,

Mark Pettingill
President of the Center for Grieving Children's Board of Directors