

State Youth Council – Introductions and Discussion

Respectfully submitted to the Senate Government Operations Committee

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Thank you for inviting the State Youth Council and for listening to their thoughts. My name is Nicole Miller, Executive Director of Vermont Afterschool, and I live in Burlington.

Vermont Afterschool is thrilled and grateful to work with the VT Department of Health and the Youth Services Advisory Council (YSAC) to support the State Youth Council. This has truly been one of the most rewarding experiences I've had in my 17-year career in afterschool and youth development.

There were 200 applicants for the 28 appointee spots, representing each of Vermont's counties, and a wide range of ages (11-18), lived experiences, identities, perspectives, concerns, interests, and engagement in leadership opportunities.

As you've heard, the Council members are passionate and eager to see this Council come to life. They have many of the same concerns of those living in Vermont – mental health for themselves, their peers, and community members at large; climate change; the urgency to become a more equitable and just society; education; ensuring young people have a voice and leadership opportunities; and more. Through thoughtful questions and ideas, they treat each other with kindness, seek to understand differences, and push those of us working with the Council to ensure we're doing everything we can to support them. We've taken our time to create a youth-driven space to ensure that these young people have the best opportunity to be active, engaged, connected, and heard.

To date, the State Youth Council has met three times. A kickoff meeting was held in Montpelier on Tuesday, December 13th; and virtual meetings were held on January 12th and February 2nd.

- The first meeting primarily served as an opportunity to start creating relationships, discuss partnership and productive relationships, examine their identities, build individual to collective core values, and explore leadership role models.
- The second focused on starting to understand how a bill becomes a law and Council logistics.
- The third included solidifying subcommittee interest, forming the executive committee, and choosing a chair.
- Youth are compensated for their time and travel expenses as indicated in the language of [Act 109](#).

We are grateful for your support in this important step forward for Vermont, and hope that the General Assembly will continue encouraging the State Youth Council during this initial phase and beyond.