

Testimony

VT Legislature House & Senate Appropriations

Monday February, 15, 2016 VT Tech Williston, VT

Good Evening My name is Jim Fitzpatrick from South Burlington, VT.

I am asking that the VT legislature support the Expanded Learning

Opportunities (ELO) Special Fund with \$2.5 million for Fiscal Year 2017.

This appropriation will ensure that all high-need communities in Vermont can receive the financial support to make sure that children, and families have access to quality afterschool and summer learning programs.

Many Vermont families want access to expanded learning

opportunities—including school-based afterschool, summer learning,

YMCA's, vacation programs, etc—but these families and children do not

have access because they are not available in their towns, the costs are

prohibitive, or there are waiting lists. Currently, there are 21,000 children

K-12 enrolled in such programs and another 22,000 would participate in if

ones were available in their community.

I served as a school administrator in the Hardwick, Vergennes, Woodstock, Hinesburg, Barre City and Essex Town districts. As you would imagine the opportunities for afterschool and summer programs in these district towns ranged from zero to multiple choices for parents and children.

Afterschool, evening, and summer programs are not new. We have been providing such opportunities in sports, drama, and music, etc. for select students in schools for years. In this century the need has changed because community life has changed. Helping to fund these programs might be one of the smarter investments the VT Legislature could make for its youth, and the economic future of the state.

Expanded learning opportunities are key for all working families, regardless of income, by providing a safe space where students can continue their learning while their parents are at work. We know that 88% of Vermont parents support public funding of afterschool programs*.

I hope the legislature will make the financial commitment to support the ELO Special Fund in FY17.

Thank you and if I can be of any help please contact me..

Respectfully,

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- 2014 National Study by National Afterschool