



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

To: Sen. Jane Kitchel, Chair Senate Committee on Appropriations
From: Sen. Ann Cummings, Chair Senate Committee on Education
Date: April 12, 2016
Subject: Funding for Vermont Expanded Learning Opportunities Special Fund

Thank you for your hard work to build a budget that reflects our State's core values and that meets our commitments to Vermonters. On behalf of the Senate Committee on Education, we appreciate your careful attention to both the details and the big picture.

With many of our State's toughest issues in mind—hunger, addiction, the academic achievement gap, working families struggling to make ends meet—*we are writing to request that you consider an appropriation of as much funding as possible into the Expanded Learning Opportunities Special Fund (ELOSF), which was created last year but not funded.*

Appropriating money for this fund in FY2017 will allow the Agency of Education to create a grant structure and potentially leverage private funding as well, as contemplated by the statute creating the fund (Sec. 2906 of Title 16).

If the ELOSF is funded, it could provide grants to increase access to quality afterschool and summer learning programs, particularly for low-income children and families. According to Vermont Afterschool, Inc., 88% of Vermont parents support public funding for afterschool and summer learning programs.

Quality afterschool and summer learning programs keep kids safe, inspire learners, and help working families. Vermont currently has no State funding designated solely for afterschool and summer learning programs and only limited access to other funds that can be used for these programs. The State does benefit from federal funds from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, but even so, according to Vermont Afterschool, Inc.:

- 22,000 children and youth in Vermont today would be participating in afterschool and summer learning programs if more programs were available and accessible.

- Over 79% of Vermont children (ages 6-17) have parents who work. For working families there is often a gap of 15-25 hours per week when parents are working and children are out of school. This gap is even larger during the summer months and school vacation weeks.
- Research has shown that where students fall behind is not in the classroom but outside the school day and over the summer. In fact, up to two-thirds of the academic achievement gap can be attributed to differences in summer learning opportunities.
- Studies show that the afterschool hours of 3-6 p.m. are the peak hours for children and youth to engage in risky behaviors, such as experiment with alcohol and drugs, commit crimes or be victims of crime. For every dollar spent on quality early learning opportunity programs, including afterschool and summer learning programs, Vermont gets back \$2.18 in long-term savings and benefits from reduced criminal activity and substance abuse treatment, as well as increased high school completion and work productivity.
- In many schools, lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. or even earlier. The snacks and suppers provided during an afterschool program may be the only healthy food to which a child has access until the next day. In summer, access to food is even more important, and food delivered as part of a summer learning program is much more effective in feeding children than food delivered through a separate stand-alone meal site.
- The 2014 America After 3PM report (a national study) ranked Vermont 51st in the nation (including Washington D.C.) for having the lowest percentage of low-income children in afterschool and summer programs (only 14% in Vermont, versus 45% nationally).

Thank you for your consideration of our request.