

TO: Rep. Dave Sharpe and House Education Committee

FROM: Holly Morehouse, Vermont Afterschool (hollymorehouse@vermontafterschool.org)

DATE: March 15, 2016

RE: ELO Special Fund and H. 270

Thank you for your support of afterschool and summer learning programs. I appreciate the time and energy that you have given to this important issue this session.

I would like to express full support for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21C) program. Running a 21C-funded program in Winooski is what first brought me into the world of afterschool. I also ran the state 21C program for several years at the VT Dept of Education (back before it was the Agency of Education). Vermont Afterschool has provided professional development, technical assistance, program improvement, and evaluation supports and services to Vermont's 21C-funded programs since 2009. The week before last I was in DC doing Hill visits to the VT Congressional Delegation to advocate on behalf of continued funding for the 21C program. It's a great program. However, I would caution against directly tying the state ELO Fund dollars to the current 21C grant process and the restrictions that come with those federal dollars (e.g., minimum grant size, timing of awards, federally determined priorities, etc.) Instead, I would ask the House Education Committee to consider H.270 which gives VT the flexibility and opportunity to decide how best to allocate and maximize any dollars in the ELO Special Fund each year.

The following are brief responses to some of the questions that came up in testimony from the Agency of Education this morning.

Funding Concerns. The ELO Special Fund is not expected to divert dollars that are currently being used to sustain 21C grants. Decisions about sustainability around 21C funds are made locally (e.g., school budget, town budget, private grants, participation fees) and most of these funds would not be going into the state ELO Special Fund in any case. Nothing in H.270 prevents current 21C programs from continuing to receive other private grants. One of the roles of the ELO Committee (as defined in H.270) is to work on increasing private investment in afterschool and summer learning. Without the ELO Committee, unless AOE takes on this role as well, it is unclear how the work to increase private contributions would proceed.

Different processes. Nothing in the bill would prevent the AOE from using the ELO Committee as readers on the 21C grant applications thus reducing burden for the agency. If this would help address the agency's capacity issues, language could be added to the committee's defined roles (page 7 of H.270).

There are distinct advantages in not having the ELO Special Fund be subject to all the same restrictions as the federal 21C \$ thereby giving VT the ability to target state dollars to meet our own priorities. For example, three grants were released last week by AOE, one specific to ELOs and personalized learning. The assumption is that these grants were not integrated with 21C program because the agency needed these grants to have different parameters, measures, processes, timelines, etc. The same could be true for the grants from the ELO Special Fund. In addition, grants from the ELO Special Fund, if kept separate,

could help support schools that have lost their 21C funding or where 21C funding cannot be used to fund a particular site for some reason (e.g., \$50k/year minimum requirement on 21C grants, differently eligibility requirements, etc.). Even the timing of funding within the ELO Special Fund would not align with the current 21C process thereby making it difficult to run these together as a single grant competition.

AOE's Role. H.270 includes the AOE on the ELO Committee thus giving them a voice in the development of the ELO Special Fund's grant process. The bill also gives AOE additional control that they specifically asked for when the language was discussed for H.391 (e.g., AOE awards the grants, informs the metrics, controls the reporting).

Full Scope of Afterschool. In order to address gaps in access and equity, the ELO Committee needs to be able to look at the whole state and how best to leverage all possible funding sources. Because AOE's support of afterschool is largely limited to the federal 21C program (due to capacity and funding issues beyond their control), afterschool programs run by schools but not funded by 21C dollars are not part of the AOE's contract with Vermont Afterschool for support. For example, once a community loses 21C funding, they are dropped from receiving any supports from AOE under 21C funding (e.g., Grand Isle, Putney, Orange East SU, Arlington, elementary schools in Bennington, Canaan, etc.). In order to support these other sites and schools, Vermont Afterschool has to bring in funding from other sources, grants, and contracts. The ELO Committee would be best positioned to address gaps and leverage other funding sources if they could include multiple agencies, stakeholders, and viewpoints in all discussions.

Data Needs. The data grant from the National Conference of State Legislatures was specifically awarded to Vermont to help gather and analyze the data needed to make recommendations about equity and access to afterschool and summer learning in VT. The ELO Working Group's reports are based on this data and include references to both national reports and research as well as to site-specific program data in Vermont. Maps included in the ELO Working Group's first report identifies gaps in access tied to poverty and geographic location. Since that time, Vermont Afterschool has worked to update the VT-specific program data each year and has live, interactive maps posted on our website (<http://www.vermontafterschool.org/resources/map/>). If additional information is needed, H.270 names Vermont Afterschool on the ELO Committee and we are committed to working with the committee to help provide that support.