

Good evening,

My name is Liz Filskov, and I am a proud Rutland City Public School Teacher.

I come from a very well educated family and am acutely aware of my privilege. I do not believe that education is a privilege, however; I believe it is a right and a necessity. I am here tonight to advocate on behalf of critical needs for Vermont's children and for their families about whom I care deeply.

All children are deserving of access to education, and all families to high-quality and affordable childcare. Having lived in France, I have witnessed firsthand the benefits of paid family leave, publicly funded childcare, and education birth through 4 years of college. There is no reason we cannot offer the same to our citizens, starting right now, here in Vermont.

Esteemed legislators, we are the policy makers. Let us consider for a moment where we are, as a nation, in terms of our priorities – fiscal and otherwise. In 2018 we still need gender equality. In 2018 we still need racial equality. In 2018 we still need economic equality. I am here tonight to proclaim that education equality is a step toward minimizing these sociologically debilitating disparities.

Early childhood literacy has a direct correlation to success later in life. The benefits that stem from early childhood literacy are critical needs now. It is our duty as a society to set all children up for success, and I believe it is high time we put our money where our mouths are. No more gender inequality. No more class disparity. No more racial disparity. We need education equality now.

Therefore, this evening I ask that the legislature increase funding for Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program by **\$9.2 million** in order to close the current funding gap so that future children will not need remedial reading or special education services, so that we can move toward a more literate, equitable, happier – *less incarcerated, less drug-addicted* society.

I also ask that the legislature appropriate **\$2.5M** to the Expanded Learning Opportunities Special Fund, which supports children and working families' access to high-quality afterschool and summer opportunities, and which are jobs in our community.

Esteemed legislators, we all have a vested interest in, and a responsibility for, our communities and the children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.


Liz Filskov

Child Care: Can't afford it; can't live without it.



THE SOLUTION:

Increase funding for CCFAP, Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program.

The need for child care is a reality for the majority of families with young children in Vermont. But for most families, child care is too expensive. In fact, some middle-income Vermont families are spending nearly 40% of their income on child care.

The affordability challenge forces parents to make tough choices, pitting their natural desire to provide their children the best start in life against so many other needs—including their ability to keep a good job.

Average annual cost of child care per child in Vermont:

Infants:	\$8,205 - \$11,513
Toddlers:	\$7,846 - \$11,130
Preschoolers:	\$7,748 - \$10,440*

The average two-parent, two-child Vermont family is spending about \$20,000 a year on child care—more than the cost of full-time, in-state tuition at a Vermont State College.

Vermont families need help paying for child care.

* Act 166 programming may impact the rates of pre-qualified preschool programs.

CCFAP



The Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) helps Vermont families afford child care. For most families, eligibility for assistance is determined by household income. The less a family earns, the more assistance they are eligible to receive. Families earning 300% of the 2017 Federal Poverty Level (\$73,800 for a family of 4) or less are eligible.

The problem is that CCFAP has been underfunded for years and, as a result, is not really meeting the need of families:

1. It doesn't provide enough assistance to eligible families, who are still paying up to ~40% of their income to child care.
2. The rates it pays to child care providers on behalf of eligible families are based on what providers were charging in 2008 and 2009—not their current costs.
3. Not enough families are receiving assistance.

TAKE ACTION!

Let's Grow Kids is part of a group through the Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance advocating for an increase of \$9.2 million for CCFAP to fill the current funding gap. We need your help asking legislators to find a way to significantly increase funding for CCFAP. Use our online Legislator Lookup tool to find your legislators and email them to say you believe this is a smart investment for Vermont:

letsgrowkids.org/legislator-lookup



ZAP THE GAP!



With Afterschool
& Summer Learning



SUPPORT STATE FUNDING OF \$2.5 MILLION IN THE EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES (ELO) SPECIAL FUND

Quality afterschool and summer learning programs keep kids safe & healthy, inspire learners, help working families, and support Vermont's vision for education. Vermont has the lowest level of low-income children enrolled in afterschool in the entire nation. Help to **zap all the gaps**—the achievement gap, opportunity gap, geographic gap, and homework gap—by supporting a \$2.5 million appropriation to the ELO Special Fund.

Vermont currently has no dedicated state funding to ensure that afterschool and summer learning programs are available and accessible to all.

The **ELO Special Fund** was passed in 2015 as part of Act 48, which included language establishing a state fund for ELOs. The purpose of the ELO Special Fund is to expand access to programs that serve preK-12 children and youth outside the school day on a regular basis, including before and after school, school vacation weeks, and summer.

More than 21,000 Vermont K-12 youth are enrolled in afterschool, but 22,000+ are waiting for an available program.

An annual appropriation of \$2.5 million would help to ensure that **all high-need communities** in Vermont get the support they need to make sure that children, youth, and families have access to quality afterschool and summer learning programs.

Vermont Child Poverty Council Report January 2018

“Studies have shown that students who do not participate in enrichment activities outside core school hours are more likely to fall behind their peers in terms of academic achievement; are more likely to engage in risky or dangerous behaviors; and are less likely to continue on to college. The Council requests that the General Assembly provide funding to the Expanded Learning Opportunities Special Fund to expand access to afterschool and summer learning programs, particularly in underserved areas of the State and in communities with a high percentage of students from families with low income.”

Vermont Early Childhood Alliance January 2017

“Quality afterschool and summer learning programs keep children safe, inspire learners, and help working families. The Alliance supports Vermont Afterschool’s ‘Zap the Gap’ campaign to create a state appropriation for the Expanded Learning Opportunities Special Fund, which if funded can provide grants to increase access to these programs, particularly for low-income children and families.”

Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High Quality, Affordable Child Care November 2016

“The Commission focused on early care and learning for children birth to five years old; however, the Commission recognizes that early care and learning needs for families do not end at five years old. Before, after-school, and summer-time care is critical for supporting working parents and for providing safe, nurturing and educational environments for young children.”

PreK-16 Council Working Group on Expanded Learning Opportunities November 2015

“If eliminating the academic achievement gap, ensuring equity in educational opportunities, and fulfilling the vision of Vermont’s Education Quality Standards are indeed priorities for the state, then it is critical that the Legislature and Administration take leadership with investment and action on this issue by following the recommendations [detailed in the report] and allocating state funding to work toward providing access to Expanded Learning Opportunities for the children and youth in every Vermont community.”



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Vermont Afterschool is a statewide nonprofit dedicated to supporting and sustaining innovative learning opportunities that extend beyond the school day for all Vermont’s children and youth.