

Rebecca Buck

From: Sara Robertson-Ryan <SRRyan@gbymca.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 14, 2018 3:20 PM
To: Theresa Utton; Rebecca Buck
Subject: Budget testimony
Attachments: 2018 state budget testimony.docx

Hi Theresa and Rebecca,

Attached is the testimony I gave at Monday night's hearing in St. Albans.

I'd like to add that given my position here at the Y, I know the impact of Afterschool and Summer programs have for our children and families. The scholarships we give out, the healthy snacks we have prepared, the hours we offer care, and the enriching opportunities we provide are invaluable to so many of our families. The wrap around support Afterschool programs provide youth in foster care including caring staff members, ability to work through enrollment quickly, and Specialized Care status provides much needed support to both the children in our care as well as the Foster Parents in need of services.

As I mentioned at last night's hearing, I have had 6 communities so far this year reach out to me to see how the Y can help start programs for them. While we aren't always able to help due to capacity, we attempt to provide guidance and support in whatever way we can.

Funding the Expanded Learning Opportunities Special Fund in the amount of \$2.5 million for FY19 would help those high needs communities start programs. It would help programs increase quality or provide more enriching opportunities for youth in Vermont. It could provide support to young people that truly need opportunities outside of school time hours.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sara Robertson-Ryan
Director of School Age & Family Programs
GREATER BURLINGTON YMCA
266 College Street, Burlington VT 05401
(P) 802.652.8150 (F) 802.660.8689
(E) srryan@gbymca.org (W) gbymca.org
(O) [Facebook](#)

The Y: We're for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

Hello. My name is Sara Robertson-Ryan and I live in Fletcher, VT. I'd like to thank the Vermont House and Senate Appropriations Committees for holding this hearing and taking public testimony.

I would like to ask that the legislature fund the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Special Fund with an appropriation of \$2.5 million for Fiscal Year 2019. An annual appropriation of \$2.5 million would ensure all high needs communities (communities like mine) in Vermont could get the financial support they need to make sure that children, youth, and families have access to quality afterschool and summer learning programs.

Since the school day doesn't span the length of a typical work day, after school programming is essential. It is absolutely necessary for my children to have a safe environment for childcare; and having a chance for expanded learning opportunities will ensure that my children don't fall behind their peers academically.

I chose to live in Vermont, in Franklin County because I want the space for my children to connect with nature and enjoy a small town community connection. I don't want this to be at an expense of their academic or social success. If programs weren't offered in my community (due in large part to my help in arranging such), I'm not sure we could continue to have both my spouse and I work or could continue to live in rural Vermont.

Many Vermonters feel the same way or are already stuck in making the hard choice of continuing a career or moving to a new location. Expanded Learning Opportunities and Childcare are crucial for growing families.

In Governor Scott's Budget Address, he spoke about creating the best Cradle-to-Career system in the nation, giving our kids the brightest possible future, and attracting more families to all areas of Vermont. One way to accomplish this would be to focus on supporting education initiatives during the out-of-school time hours where all Vermont youth have access to opportunities such as STEM learning and workforce development skills.

For every \$1 spent on quality expanded learning opportunities, Vermont gets back \$2.18 in long-term savings from reduced criminal activity and substance abuse treatment, as well as accruing benefits from increased high school graduation rates and work productivity.

You'll have families like my own *stay* in Vermont because we have safe, essential, and beneficial opportunities for our children to excel and not fall into the achievement gap.

I very much appreciate the legislature's support of education initiatives that happen in and out of school. I hope the Appropriations committees will make the financial commitment to support expanded learning opportunities for all kids in VT by allocating funds for the ELO Special Fund in FY19.

Thanks again, I am grateful for this opportunity.