

Greetings, My name is Carol Lizotte and I live in Fairfield Vermont.

Thank you so much to 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-need communities 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.

Quality after school and summer learning programs

keep kids safe & healthy,

inspire learners,

help working families,

and support Vermont's vision for education.

For the 2016-2017 academic year, the Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union After School & Summer Programs, which includes the towns of Swanton, Highgate, Sheldon & Franklin, had over 752 students participating in our after school and summer programs.

That is 47% of FNWSU students attending. This is close to half of all students in the FNWSU schools attending after school and summer programs. You can check our website

www.afterschoolprograms.fnwsu.org to see a video celebrating our programs,

- showing the breath of our programs
- supporting education,
- promoting student achievement and self-esteem,
- keeping students safe and
- developing partnerships with community groups and businesses.

Our FNWSU after school & summer programs are free to all students,

but annually there is

- threat made to the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant Program funds,
- school budgets are squeezed tighter and tighter while public school mandates require more services, such that
- our after school & summer programs “school budget” funding is annually challenged and questioned.

Having dedicated ELO funds is one way to support education initiatives that benefit all Vermont kids, including those during the out-of-school time hours where youth can gain workforce development skills and engage in STEM learning. Check out our video www.afterschoolprograms.fnwsu.org to see how true this statement is.

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

Help “make after school and summer programs happen” for all high-need communities, so it can zap all the gaps –

The Achievement gap,

Opportunity gap,

Geographic gap,

And Homework gap.

I hope the Appropriations committees will make the financial commitment to support expanded learning opportunities for all kids in VT by allocating funds to the ELO Special Fund in FY19.

Thank you again, I am grateful for this opportunity.