

Over 21,000 kids in Vermont attend afterschool programs and approximately 6,000 are regular attendees at programs funded in part by grants from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. Our kids and families rely on these programs to keep young people safe, engaged, and on track for high school graduation, college, and careers.

Today, children across the state will attend programs in our schools, community centers, childcare centers, and local youth-focused organizations. Students may build robots, develop an app, create a mural, or play basketball. They will get help with homework or extra support in subjects they are struggling with. They will have opportunities to be physically active, learn from adult role models, and get healthy snacks and meals.

For parents, these programs are a lifeline. Most parents are still at work when school lets out. Afterschool and summer learning programs help them keep their jobs, and peace of mind.

The President's proposed budget proposes to eliminate federal funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers completely. This would be devastating to kids and families across Vermont and across our country.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative is the only federal funding stream dedicated to afterschool programs. Without it, afterschool options for parents across the state will be severely diminished. Our state would lose \$5.7 million per year impacting children, youth, and families in more than 100 Vermont communities.

I appreciate the time today to speak to the Senate Education Committee, and want to take a moment to focus on the facts about what we know about afterschool. From research and from practice, we know that afterschool works.

AFTERSCHOOL WORKS FOR KIDS AND PARENTS

- Study after study shows that afterschool programs are effective in boosting achievement. Students in afterschool programs have better grades and test scores. They attend school more often, and have better behavior and work habits in class.
- Afterschool keeps kids safe during the time of day when juvenile crime and victimization peaks. Kids in afterschool connect with positive role models, learn to make good decisions, and are less likely to smoke, drink, use drugs, or become teen parents.
- Afterschool programs help address childhood hunger by providing important access to healthy snacks and meals in the afternoons and evenings and throughout the long weeks of summer..
- They engage students, offer help and remediation where needed, prevent summer learning loss, and are recognized as an essential strategy in addressing the academic achievement gap.
- What's happening in these programs is not only good for our kids, but extremely important for our economic prosperity.

AFTERSCHOOL WORKS FOR OUR ECONOMY

- Afterschool helps families make ends meet. Four in five parents say their afterschool program helps them keep their jobs.
- For employers, afterschool programs help productivity. When working parents lack afterschool options, the resulting loss in productivity costs U.S. businesses up to \$300 billion per year.
- Afterschool programs also create jobs, currently more than 5000 full and part time jobs across the state, including some of the only work experience available to high school students in VT's rural communities.
- On top of that, afterschool programs in VT save tax payers \$2.18 for every \$1 invested by increasing kids' earning potential, improving academic achievement, and reducing juvenile crime and delinquency.

AFTERSCHOOL WORKS FOR BUSINESS

- Afterschool programs help students develop the skills that employers say are necessary for success in the workforce.
- Nearly 80 percent of jobs created nationwide over the next decade will require science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills.
- STEM jobs are among the fastest-growing and highest-paying jobs in America. Yet millions of STEM jobs are going unfilled because of the lack of qualified job candidates.
- A study released in March shows that afterschool STEM programs significantly improve kids' skills and confidence in math and science. It also shows that afterschool STEM inspires young people to pursue careers they never imagined before and helps them gain the skills they need to succeed.

Research shows that students who are consistently involved in extracurricular activities like afterschool programs are about 70 percent more likely to go to college than those who are not. At the same time, trends over the last 15 years show a widening gap between families of means and low-income families when it comes to spending on and participation in afterschool and summer enrichment activities. With the lowest percentage of low income children participating in afterschool programs in the nation, this opportunity gap exists here in Vermont and is in danger of getting even wider.

I'd like to ask the Senate Education Committee to support funding for the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Special Fund with an appropriation of \$2.5 million for Fiscal Year 2018. The legislature created the ELO Special Fund in 2015, but no money has yet been allocated.

The request for \$2.5 million for the ELO Special Fund was arrived at with great care and intention and is based on two years of research by the ELO Working Group under Vermont's PreK-16 Council. The handout accompanying my testimony describes in further detail what the state appropriation would contribute to, the role of matching dollars, and how funding would support those most in need.

Partnered with the structure outlined in H.270, the ELO Special Fund is an investment in Vermont's children, youth, and families that is research-based, leverages other dollars, addresses key state concerns, targets those most in need, and supports a working Vermont- both now and in the future. Thank you for your consideration.