

**Testimony for State of Vermont Budget Hearing (Rutland, VT)
Monday, February 25, 2019**

Hello, my name is Dean Williams. I am a retired Information Security Officer and I live in South Burlington. Thank you for holding this hearing and taking public testimony.

And, thank you to the Appropriations Committee for the six-hundred thousand dollar investment you made last year in afterschool programming as a prevention tool.

Young people spend lots of time outside of their homes and outside of school. The “third space” for youth is everywhere that is not home and not school – it’s where youth live, work, and play. Why is this important? This is a critical time, during which we can welcome youth as part of our communities and provide opportunities for them to learn new skills and play, relax, and simply be young.

I am testifying this evening to ask the Appropriations Committee to consider appropriating \$2.5 million annually so that all Vermont youth have access to high quality third space programs. An appropriation of \$2.5 million would help ensure that all high-needs communities are able to provide access to quality third space opportunities.

Students who are consistently involved in third space activities, such as afterschool programs, are about 70 percent more likely to go to college. There’s a widening gap between families of means and low-income families when it comes to participation in afterschool and summer learning activities. With the lowest percentage in the nation of low-income children participating in

afterschool programs, an opportunity gap exists here—and is in danger of getting wider.

We know from experience, that third space opportunities, like afterschool and summer learning programs, are essential to the well being, health, and future success of Vermont's children and youth. We can work with youth to provide many opportunities to grow into healthy and happy Vermonters. An annual appropriation of \$2.5 million so that all Vermont youth have access to high quality third space programs, is an investment in Vermont's children, youth, and families. Thank you for your consideration.

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