

Hello!

My name is Katelyn Irwin and I live in Essex, VT. I'd like to thank the Vermont House and Senate Appropriations Committees for holding this hearing and taking public testimony.

I am a mom of 2 children and I work full time outside of the home. Since the school day doesn't span the length of a typical work day, before and after school child care is not only necessary but an essential part for me and my children's daily lives.

I chose to live in Essex because at the time, 6 years ago, it was close to my job. Since then, my office has moved and my family has grown. Our home feels cozy and living in Chittenden County is expensive. My dream is to live in a smaller town and be closer to the mountains so that my family can have more opportunities for skiing in the winter and hiking in the summer, a benefit to living in VT! Living outside of Chittenden County can also provide a lot more for my money, so to speak. However when looking at potential towns to move to it is contingent on the following questions being answered in a favorable way:

"Does the town provide quality child care? Are there chances for my children to get involved in expanded learning opportunities? And, is the programming affordable?"

Thank you for the \$600,000 investment you made last year in afterschool programing as a prevention tool. Please consider appropriating \$2.5million annually so that all Vermonters have access to high quality third space programs.

Vermont is my home. I want a home for my children to bond with nature and enjoy a small town connection. I don't want this to be at an expense of their social or academic success. More quality third space programs need to be offered in rural communities.

For every \$1 spent on quality expanded learning opportunities, Vermont receives 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?

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 the fiscal year of 2019!

Thank you again!