

I speak for myself and all the youth involved in the afterschool and summer programs when I say thank you to the appropriations committee for the \$600,000 you chose to invest in our programs. A couple years ago I first went to the homework club in the Enosburg after school program, also known as LEAPS, for help with an assignment and now I work there as an activity leader. I have experienced and seen the multitude of benefits and opportunities it has to offer.

Kids count on the fact that once the bell rings for the day, they can walk into the cafeteria to healthy food and activities provided by the afterschool program and ran by people they know and trust. It gives us the structure of school without the stress; a constructive way to spend our free time. This combination of comfort and productivity does wonders for children. All of the activities in the afterschool program are physically and mentally engaging. Our cooking club teaches basic kitchen and cleaning skills as well as practical application for math. Indoor/Outdoor gets us active and working as a team. In the art and craft clubs we learn to think creatively and follow directions. The list goes on. Many children would not have these options if not for afterschool programs. Additionally, these opportunities are made even more accessible because buses can take kids home, which takes stress off the parents to provide transportation. Currently we have to make due with the limited amount of supplies we can get from our budget supplemented with things that the staff, including myself, purchase with their own money. We are already making a difference but imagine the *impact* we could have with more funding.

Furthermore, the influence of these programs does not stop with the end of school. The summer program is an essential aspect of our community as well. I've talked to kids that are already looking forward to it. For two months in the summer, every week day, kids can come to the school and participate in activities like slip-n-slide kickball and go on field trips to places where they can rock-climb and swim. Breakfast, lunch and transportation to and from the school is provided. Instead of sitting at home, we can socialize, exercise and go to places throughout Vermont.

Today I ask you to make a further investment in Vermont's children and therefore Vermont's future by appropriating \$2.5 million annually to these programs. To help us improve our activities and give us the flexibility to begin new and valuable ones which will attract more kids, thus creating more positive and productive action from our youth throughout our communities.

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