

Vermont House and Senate Appropriations Committees' Budget Hearing

Saint Albans, Vermont

February 25, 2019

Good evening,

My name is Nancy Keller and I want to thank the Vermont House and Senate Appropriations Committees for holding this hearing about the FY 2020 Budget and for the \$600,000 investment they made last year in after school programming for Vermont's youth. I am here today to ask you to consider appropriating \$2.5 million annually so that all Vermont kids and families have access to high quality third space programs.

I am a 30-year resident of Saint Albans and have worked as a math and science teacher for Winooski Middle School for the past 31 years. About 15 years ago and in addition to classroom teaching, I also started working for the 21st CCLC afterschool programs for Winooski School District--first as an instructor and now as a coordinator. As an educator and as a parent, I have witnessed first-hand the positive impact after school or, rather, third-space programming has had on my students and my grown children.

One of the more compelling stories from my professional life is from Rainbow Chen, a recent Winooski High School graduate. As a classroom teacher and as an after school martial arts instructor, I got to know Rainbow over the course of many years. When asked to reflect on her after school experiences for our school district's newsletter, Rainbow wrote:

I have participated in afterschool programs since I was in Kindergarten...When I was in 6th grade, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu was in its first year as an afterschool program and I was one of the first students to take it. For the first time ever, I felt like I finally had the opportunity to build and develop myself...[Now as a senior], Jiu-Jitsu became the focus of my senior project...Jiu-Jitsu has taught me so much about becoming a stronger individual inside and outside.

This experience is not just limited to me. All students have the opportunity to find their passions in the world of afterschool and summer programs.

As a veteran teacher, I believe that an excellent education includes access to high quality third-space programming, regardless of whether or not a family has the means to pay for it. It was certainly a benefit for Rainbow, who is now a sophomore, on full scholarship, at Brown University.

By allocating \$2.5 million for extended learning opportunities, there will continue to be more Rainbows, not just in Winooski School District, but across the state of Vermont.

Thank you,

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