

My name is Caleb Morehouse. I am 18 as of yesterday, and I am a senior at Vermont Commons School. I live in the New North End of Burlington, north enough that I share the 05408 Colchester zip code.

I have been in third space programs since Kindergarten and I've seen the whole range. I started off in Flynn Elementary's "Champ Camp," a large puddle of nonstop action where we all played games and figured out how to be coherently social. Now I run my school's Model United Nations (MUN) team, have worked every summer since 8th grade as a counselor at the SOLE nature camp at the Winooski Valley Park District, and am a founding member of the VT Youth Council. It has been a while since Champ Camp.

Since my memory of Champ Camp is understandably hazy, let us talk about some of my more recent endeavors in the third space.

MUN is the reason I can stand here today knowing, that as much as this event is my first time speaking to the House Commerce Committee about youth rights, I have spoken to countless Model UN General Assemblies about issues from the refugee crisis to nuclear disarmament. Model UN has taught me how to speak confidently and concisely in front of audiences ranging from ten to two hundred.

My job at SOLE camp has been a five year adventure through the limits of human compassion and the hardship of honest work. Waking up at seven AM on a mid-70's, sunny, late July day to go supervise six to nine year olds until four PM has certainly tested me, and I would like to believe there is some level of grit I have earned from that experience.

The Youth Council taught me that I can make a difference. In a world where the value of an individual is often lost in exchange for hard numbers, the Youth Council is a reminder that my thoughts and opinions can matter if I am willing to fight for them and fought for them we have. We now sit on 44 grant applications totaling over \$100,000 in requests with \$25,000 to hand out, so our work is in no way done.

I would like to remind the committee that there is an entirely different benefit youth can derive from these activities. I would be remiss to exclude how the American University Director of Admissions took specific interest in my work experience, or how my acceptance letter from Clark University specifically highlighted my participation in the Youth Council. It is every parent and educators' goal and responsibility to send off graduating seniors to high achieving colleges fully prepared to enter a real, difficult world. My uncle, a retired professor at the University of South Carolina, always says that college exists to teach you three aspects of life, how to talk, how to work, and how to write. Given that sage advice, maybe we should value it equally important for students to learn how to ask for a raise as it is to learn how to do calculus, maybe we should consider youth learning how to communicate and push their ideas on the same playing field as learning the anatomy of a frog, and maybe we should learn that acting on one's ideas can lead to greater opportunity than doing yet another survey for statistics class.

I have been wakened to the realization that not everybody has the opportunity to participate in the third space like I have. Which is why I call upon the legislature to join with the Youth Council's efforts to further support third space programs on the same terms as those taking place during the school day. Thank you, Representatives.