

**Testimony for State of Vermont Budget Hearing
(Winooski, VT) Monday, February 10, 2020**

Hello, my name is Dean Williams and I live in South Burlington. Thank you to the Vermont House and Senate Appropriations Committees for taking public testimony.

And, thank you for the six hundred thousand-dollar investment you made last year, from the tobacco settlement funding, in order to increase access to afterschool programs. Those funds have been allocated through the Afterschool for All grant program. The state needs \$2.5 million annually to reach all youth, but this is a great first step.

Young people enrich our communities. They are problem-solvers who are eager to be engaged. *We* have a collective responsibility to ensure that all young Vermonters are safe, healthy, supported, educated, and engaged. Vermont youth have a right to explore interests, connect with each other, and build skills. And, these opportunities should exist throughout *all* of our communities.

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

We know from experience that opportunities, like afterschool and summer learning programs, are essential to the well-being, health, and future of Vermont's children and youth. And, we know we can

get Afterschool for All with a \$2.5 million annual state investment. Please move forward now with Afterschool for All—Vermont is ready to go.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dean Williams
4 Brownell Way
South Burlington, VT 05403
djw@acm.org
802-864-8345