

Hello, my name is Jolanta Labejsza and I am the Site Coordinator of One Planet Afterschool Program in Rochester. I would like to thank the Vermont House and Appropriations Committees for taking testimonies on funding programs like ours.

Quality afterschool and summer learning programs are very important for our families. Research tells us that by adequately addressing what is happening with our children and youth after school and during summer months, we will be able to make meaningful progress on some of our most critical issues affecting Vermont's families.

- **Working families.** Here in Vermont, 77% of kids age 6-17 have both parents in the workforce and so such programs are essential to parents.

In our program, children receive help with their homework so when parents pick them up, they get more time to spend together as a family.

- **Food.** These programs provide important access to healthy snacks and meals, which is especially helpful during the summer weeks when school is out.

It is so heartwarming to see how excited our children are when served healthy and yummy snacks. One of their first questions is: "what's for a snack today?". They often ask if they could take some of that food home for their younger siblings - what could be more touching?

- **Keeping kids safe.** Studies show that children and youth who participate in afterschool and summer programs are less likely to experiment with alcohol and drugs, or get into trouble.

In One Planet Afterschool program, parents trust our staff to take care of their children even if they happen to be a little late picking up due to inclement weather. And children play happily with Lego blocks, color or pick any other activity - the last half an hour is free choice time.

Students attending our afterschool programs get to spend a lot of time outdoors, unwinding from a long school day and can participate in exciting and educational enrichment programs. On early release days (every month in our school) we organize fun field trips to places like museums, bowling alley, swimming, gymnastics, among others. For many, this is their only opportunity to visit those places.

Our children deserve engaging opportunities that can spark their interest and set them up for success. I absolutely love to see a child take interest in cooking, woodworking or Robotics wondering how this can help them possibly choose a life long career.

We need \$2.5 million annually to reach all families, there are still so many waiting for access to our programs - your help will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you very much for your time and I hope you will consider investing in our young people - they will make a better Vermont once we help them become good citizens.

Sincerely,
Jolanta Labejsza

