

Hello. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments today. My name is Susan Fortier and I am the Executive Director of the Meeting Waters YMCA. We run youth development programs - Y-ASPIRE after school programs and summer day camp programs, in southeastern Vermont.

During the past year childcare and out of school time programs, including afterschool and summer camps, have had to be flexible and adaptable to meet an ever-changing demand and we have proven that we can do that. We have pivoted quickly and efficiently, providing programs that meet the needs of working families while ensuring quality, child-centered programs with a focus on meeting the social-emotional needs of children and addressing the learning gap while giving families the support they need to continue to work and provide for their families during this critical period. Never has the need for supporting quality, enriching, affordable care been more apparent and needed. It is a moral and economic necessity.

Today I ask that you continue to support quality childcare, afterschool and summer programs:

- By increasing funding and restructuring the childcare financial assistance program to ensure that families spend no more than 10% of their income on child care;
- By supporting the STARS (Step Ahead Recognition) program in a way that supports families as well as providers and staff;
- and by supporting Universal afterschool care, which will ensure access throughout the State to quality out of school time programs.

For so many family's participation in quality programs would not be possible without financial assistance. The need is greater than ever.

As one parent wrote recently:

*"My son has attended Y-ASPIRE and attended the YMCA camp for his first time this past summer. He was feeling down and out from not seeing his classmates in so long or not interacting with anyone other than mom for the most part. While attending camp he was so overjoyed to be there he even asked if he could go on the weekends! He learned a lot of really neat stuff and enjoyed all of the staff. These programs, and the financial assistance I received, provided me with the ability to stay employed through this very crucial time."*

Thank you, for your time and consideration. I am grateful for this opportunity.

Susan Fortier, Executive Director  
Meeting Waters YMCA – Serving Southeastern Vermont