

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Ginny Lyons, Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

FROM: Emily Hawes, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health

DATE: February 24, 2022

SUBJECT: DMH S.197 Recommendations

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This memo is to provide recommendations on bill S. 197 as requested during our phone call this afternoon.

We would respectfully request the following language shifts in the bill:

- The Agency of Education and Vermont Afterschool will coordinate with the Department of Mental Health to bolster current afterschool programming by integrating mental health resources and supports into existing programs, and creating clear pathways for children and youth in need of further intervention.
- Due to our understanding that ESSR funds cannot be utilized in this manner, if alternative funding can be secured to offer mental health focused afterschool programs, it is recommended that the Agency of Education, in consultation with the Department of Mental Health oversee the funds and granting process to provide grants to both school-based and community-based afterschool and summer programs.
- The Department of Mental Health recommends a model of mental health integration in afterschool programming that will offer consistency and reliability to children and youth, will be fiscally sustainable, and will not create further workforce capacity challenges for afterschool organizations, AOE, and DMH.