



For Immediate Release: December 15, 2022

Media Contacts:

Ben Truman | Vermont Department of Health
802-316-2117 / 802-863-7281
bennett.truman@vermont.gov

Seth F. Hibbert | Vermont Afterschool
802-999-7115
seth@vermontafterschool.org

Vermont State Youth Council Holds First Meeting
A unique opportunity for youth voice and leadership

BURLINGTON, VT – A group of 28 newly appointed young leaders from across the state met this week to convene the first meeting of the Vermont State Youth Council. The full-day session, held at the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier, brought together a diverse group of youth across ages, grades, genders, lived experiences, policy interests, and other characteristics. The Council is charged with providing Governor Phil Scott and state legislators advice and recommendations on policies that impact young Vermonters.

The Vermont State Youth Council was established through [Act 109](#), signed into law in May 2022. The application process to join the Council opened in September, and more than 200 applications were submitted in less than a month.

“My parents never hesitated to assure me that if I felt something wasn't right, I have the power to change it, so I've spent a lot of my time working for small change within my school and community,” said Nisha Hickok, an 11th grader from Hinesburg. “I'm excited to join the State Youth Council because it's an opportunity to directly impact change across the state.”

Support for the Council is provided by the [Youth Services Advisory Council](#), an Agency of Human Services interagency workgroup with members from the Departments of Health and Mental Health, Vermont Afterschool, a statewide nonprofit that promotes afterschool and out-of-school learning opportunities, and other community and state partners.

The energy and excitement of these young Vermonters was inspiring,” said Sara Chesbrough, one of the Health Equity Team leaders at the Health Department. “It's so important that as

policy makers we are committed to enabling young Vermonters to be formally invested in policies that impact them. We have a lot to learn from the young people in our lives."

The Council's organizational session was facilitated by youth leaders from [Up for Learning](#) and representatives of [Vermont Afterschool](#). In the coming months, members will receive training on Vermont governance and the legislative process, public speaking, effective meeting procedures, leadership skills, and how to formulate policy proposals.

"Young people make a better Vermont, especially when their voices are heard and respected," said Vermont Afterschool Executive Director Nicole Miller. "They're problem-solvers and, as we learned during the application process, they are eager to be engaged. I'm grateful to the Legislature and Governor Scott for their support of authentic youth voice within Vermont's government."

The Health Department's 2019 [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) points to opportunities for including youth voice and leadership in policy development. The Vermont YRBS found that 16% of youth stated that they do not believe they matter to people in their community. There was a significant decrease in youth who say they feel like they matter from 2017 to 2019. The survey showed that female-identified youth, youth of color, those who identify as LGBTQ+, and younger people are significantly less likely than their peers to feel they matter.

The Vermont State Youth Council will meet monthly and may hold up to four public hearings annually to take testimony on issues affecting Vermont youth. They will also gather peer input through surveys or polls.

Members of the Vermont State Youth Council:

Jack Edgar, Brattleboro
Deniz Kuser, Bennington
Emily Maikoo, Bennington
Mitchel Tasca, Brattleboro
Marina Wilson, Brattleboro
James Winship, Clarendon
Carver Maxwell, Coventry
Jeremiah Watson, East Haven
Ellie Neckers, Eden
Grace Bourn, Fairlee
Sadie Farris, Grand Isle
Jaxon DalPra, Hartland
Nisha Hickok, Hinesburg
Mason Pastor, Hyde Park

Lilith Bachand, Island Pond
Alida Apgar, Lyndonville
Rebecca Orten, Middlebury
Joshua Stearns, Norwich
Aliyah Ivey-Leake, Shaftsbury
Cooper O'Connell, St. Albans
Augustus Krueger, Underhill
Adrienne Smits, Vergennes
Harmony Devoe, Warren
Jasper Lorien, West Berlin
Astrid Longstreth, West Bolton
Molly Armbrust, White River Junction
Graciela Sanchez, Williston
Amanda Riley, Windsor

About the Department of Health

We have been the state's public health agency for more than 130 years, working every day to protect and promote the health of Vermonters.

Visit healthvermont.gov – Join us @healthvermont on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#)

About Vermont Afterschool

Vermont Afterschool is a statewide nonprofit dedicated to ensuring that the children and youth in every Vermont community are able to benefit from the power of universal afterschool, summer learning, and third space programs during the out-of-school time hours. We believe that we have a collective responsibility to ensure all young Vermonters are active, connected, engaged, and heard.