

To: Senate and House Appropriations Committees
From: Nicole Miller, Executive Director, Vermont Afterschool
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Date: February 20, 2025
Re: FY26 Public Budget Hearing – Afterschool Special Fund

Good evening, my name is Nicole Miller and I'm the Executive Director of Vermont Afterschool, a nonprofit organization that works to strengthen afterschool and summer programs, empower youth, and expand access so that any child or youth in Vermont who wants to attend a program, can do so. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I ask the Senate and House Appropriations Committees to support the Governor's proposal to fully fund the Afterschool and Summer Special Fund.

As a youth, my family moved around a lot, both of my parents worked full-time jobs with an hour or more commute each way, and we rarely had the funds to participate in out-of-school experiences or clubs. My sister was my afterschool program and despite trying, it wasn't a very fun experience!

In my 17 plus years in the afterschool and summer field I've gotten to see firsthand the power of afterschool and its impact on hundreds, if not thousands of youth. Through consistent participation in afterschool, youth gain critical skills, experience belonging and connection, increase protective factors, decrease risky behaviors, improve academic outcomes, and so much more. Furthermore, a 26-year longitudinal research study from Dr. Deb Vandell and her colleagues at the School of Education at the University of California, Irvine, shows consistent participation in programs predicts outcomes for not only the time in which youth are attending the program, but for years to come.

We need to ensure that every child and youth in Vermont has these opportunities and fully funding the Afterschool and Summer Special Fund as in the Governor's budget proposal, helps us get there.

Thank you.