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To: Senate and House Appropriations Committees

From: Nicole Miller, Executive Director, Vermont Afterschool

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Re: FY27 Public Budget Hearing – Afterschool Special Fund & Vermont State Youth Council

Good afternoon, 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 am happy to see that the Governor continues to ensure that the Afterschool and Summer Special Fund is fully funded. I also support the Agency's budget language request. I hope that the Legislature will ensure the full allocation continues to go to the Afterschool and Summer Special Fund as well, demonstrating Vermont's commitment to ensure all youth in Vermont have access to afterschool and summer programming, at low- or no-cost.

Additionally, Vermont Afterschool supports the Vermont State Youth Council through a grant agreement with the Vermont Department of Health. The Council is currently funded through the Department of Health's federal funding and given the uncertainty and challenges of federal funding at this time, I wanted to flag this as a potential challenge, as it could change at any time. The FY27 cost for the State Youth Council is \$140,000, which includes youth stipends, mileage reimbursement, meeting venues, website fees, and Vermont Afterschool's administrative and technical assistance such as staff time to coordinate Council and Committee meetings, logistical support, being a liaison for the Council, processing stipend payments, etc. This funding is essential for the Council to continue providing youth a direct avenue to have a voice in policymaking, creating a more inclusive democracy in Vermont. Every year, we see more requests for the Council to meet with policymakers and State leadership. However, the Council and Vermont Afterschool both are concerned about the instability of federal funds and increasingly, about the potential censorship based on federal changes. The Council is requesting that its appropriation of federal funds be replaced by State funding for FY27.

Thank you.