

To: House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs
From: Elizabeth Daley, Youth Voice Committee Chair of Vermont State Youth Council,
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Hello, I am Elizabeth Daley. I am 18 years old, I was born and raised in Johnson Vermont and am in my final year at Lamoille Union High School. This is my second year with the Vermont State Youth Council and I serve as Youth Voice Chair. Thank you all so much for your time!

All Vermont youth must know they will be asked, believed, and respected in making decisions important to and impacting them, thus having a voice in their lives and communities. Therefore, the Vermont State Youth Council recommends the following:

1. The Council recommends the General Assembly pass a resolution allowing municipalities across the state to extend voting rights to 16 and/or 17 year olds in local elections and town meetings
 - a. This resolution would provide youth with a direct voice in local government, giving way to a generation of youth with a stronger sense of civic responsibility.
2. The Council recommends the General Assembly pass a resolution tasking the Vermont Agency of Education with creating a survey for students to evaluate their teacher's performances in class.
 - a. This survey would be given to students grades 6–12 at the midpoint and endpoint of each term of the school year. It would also provide students with a voice in their school community, and teachers with professional development opportunities.
3. The Council recommends the General Assembly adopt S.8 as introduced to expand eligibility for coverage under the Dr. Dynasaur program to all Vermont residents under 26 years of age or below 312 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

STATE YOUTH COUNCIL

- a. This expansion would provide a safety net toward those who may not have access to employer-sponsored insurance or those transitioning through differing educational and professional stages, ensuring their continuity of care during a formative stage of personal and professional development.

4. The Council recommends the General Assembly refrain from pushing back the implementation of the Raise the Age Initiative, and to follow through with the July 1st, 2027 implementation date outlined in Act 4.

- a. The Raise the Age Initiative acknowledges that the human brain is not fully developed at the age of 18, and that poor decision making on the part of young adults should not be met with punitive, often harsh punishments, that follow them for the rest of their lives. Furthermore, it promotes restorative justice practices, a form of justice that is oftentimes more effective in dealing with low-stakes instances of law-breaking.