

To: House Committee on Human Services
From: Nicole Miller, Executive Director, Vermont Afterschool
nicole@vermontafterschool.org | 802-448-3464
Date: March 17, 2026
Re: Recommendations for Prekindergarten education in relation to Act 73

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.

Our organization works directly with all types of afterschool and summer programs and the professionals that work within them – child care programs, schools, libraries, parks and recreation, YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, museums, teen centers, and many other youth-serving organizations. We provide a wide-range of professional development opportunities, coaching, and technical assistance.

I am a member of the Afterschool and Summer Advisory Committee created through Act 78, and our organization serves as the Vermont entity for both the 50 State Afterschool Network (comprised of statewide intermediaries focused on policy, partnerships, and quality) and the National Afterschool Association (the professional membership association for those who work with and for youth during out-of-school time.) We also work closely with the Afterschool Alliance to understand data and trends happening nationally.

I was asked to testify to you all today about our recommendations for Prekindergarten education in relation to Act 73, and am grateful for the opportunity to do so, as afterschool programs are part of the interconnected system to support children and youth in Vermont.

Afterschool, Summer, and Out-of-School Time Programming. For clarity, when we use the word “afterschool” or “out-of-school-time programming” we are talking about programming that happens after school, over the summer, during school breaks, before school, and on the weekends – anytime children and youth are outside home and school. We are also referring primarily to children and youth in Kindergarten through 12th grade, in the current system.

Mixed Delivery Model. Flexibility and a mixed delivery model are key design elements for the afterschool system, as “every community in Vermont has a unique mix of resources, partners, strengths, and opportunities.”¹ Vermont families value and seek out afterschool and summer opportunities from various community partners, including parks and recreation departments, libraries, nonprofits, schools, child care centers, and family child care programs in their work- or home-neighborhoods.

¹ Report from Vermont's Universal Afterschool Task Force, May 2021. <https://education.vermont.gov/documents/edu-legislative-report-universal-afterschool-20210518>

Funding. Many different program types and revenue streams fund the professionals who support our youth during out-of-school hours, including the “big four” – two Federal and two State funding streams:

- Title IV, Part B – Nita. M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21C)
- Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG)
- Act 76 – for those programs that are operating as licensed programs (afterschool, centers, or family home providers)
- Act 78 – State Afterschool and Summer funds, administered by the Agency of Education

Additionally, programs are also using local funds, originating from school budgets, municipalities, program participants/families, private grants and donations, and other federal funds including Title funds, Medicaid, and many others.

There is often an overlap between program types and funding sources. For instance, a licensed afterschool program can also be a 21C program, or a nonprofit runs a licensed afterschool program and an exempt-from-licensure teen center. Both may receive private donations and municipal funds and partner with many other types of programs. Braiding funding streams allow afterschool and summer programs to develop financially strong, high-quality programs with fairly compensated staff and affordable opportunities for youth and their families.

Capacity. However, even with all of these sources braided together, we still have areas of the state where there is not enough afterschool and summer programming to ensure every youth who wants to participate can do so, and as a reminder, we’re only considering Kindergarten through 12th grade. There are areas of the state in which there is no program, while other areas may have a program or programs, but still have a wait list. It is not uncommon for afterschool program enrollment for the upcoming school year to open in the spring of the preceding school year, and summer program registrations to open as early as January, with both filling up very quickly. We routinely hear from families who are looking for a program to meet their afterschool or summer needs.

Interconnected Systems and Funding

As Vermont considers changes to both public education and universal prekindergarten, those changes will have implications on the afterschool and summer system. Those include:

- As 4-year-olds move to closer to full-school-day and full-school-year education, they will need afterschool and summer programming, to support families’ needs, which the current afterschool system is not built for. There is limited availability of afterschool and summer programming for Prekindergarten-aged children, outside of the traditional full-day, full-year, 0-5 year-old programs.
- There are implications for vacation or other no-school days within the school-year as well.
- With preschool often covering losses for infant and toddlers, there is a potential for the child care sector to be destabilized, resulting in even less programs to help serve the needs of prekindergarten children.
- Afterschool and summer programs are trained and organized to support school-age children and older youth. Even within the regulated system, many programs serving afterschool and summer hours hold an afterschool-specific license. For those not yet serving three- and/or four-year-olds would need to make

significant changes to follow the regulations for this age group. This could include safety differences (playground equipment), staffing ratios and the qualifications of staff, equipment and materials, curriculum, and facilities (i.e. size of furniture, toilets).

- School-age and prekindergarten-aged programs also use different quality tools within the State's STARS system.

Again, as we know, the systems and funding streams supporting children and youth in Vermont are interconnected, and even small changes, could have big impacts on another part of the system.

Preschool Development Grant (PDG). Vermont Afterschool is working with the Child Development Division, the Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures, the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children, and First Children's Finance on data and monitoring under this year's PDG grant. In our work, we are tasked with doing an analysis of the afterschool and summer program needs for three- and four-year-olds, which we're eager to do. This will add to the afterschool and summer program whole landscape data we are poised to do, with the hiring of a new staff position, and increased data infrastructure. We hope there will continue to be investments in this area.

Lastly, I am happy to continue working with the Committee as you work on this issue and related bills. Thank you again for your time.