

Dear Appropriations Committee members,

I am writing to urge you to support increased one-time funding for [MENTOR Vermont](#), included in the FY26 budget recently passed by the Senate. Mentoring is a low investment, cost-effective prevention tool that has lifelong impacts on youth, mentors, and Vermont communities. [Click here for their 2023-24 Impact Report.](#)

As we see all too often in our communities across the state, too many young people don't feel connected and supported by their community. In the latest [2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), only **56% of middle and 54% of high school students in VT expressed that they feel like they matter to their community. Yet, 96% of youth mentees report "My mentor makes me feel like I matter."**

MENTOR Vermont delivers on prevention, as mentoring is particularly well-suited to address the needs of youth that could benefit from additional supports. Mentoring, at its core, guarantees young people that there is someone who cares about them, assures them they are not alone in dealing with day-to-day challenges, and makes them feel like they matter. Yet one in three young people will grow up without this critical asset, without an adult to turn to for support beyond their immediate family.

I know you have difficult budget decisions to make this year, and appreciate your support of critical funding for mentoring. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions, or to discuss further.

Thank you,
Katherine Bielawa Stamper
MENTOR Vermont Board Member