

Dear Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Carolyn (Heywood) Picazio and I am the Director of Library Services at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier, VT. I grew up in McIndoe Falls, VT and have been working as a professional librarian in Vermont libraries for about 15 years.

Please accept this as written testimony in support of the provision in S.232 that would specifically allocate a portion of the Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund to the Department of Libraries to support this programming in local libraries. If your goal is to expand availability and create equity in after school and summer programming, there is no way you could do that more effectively than by including public libraries as specific recipients of these funds.

Libraries are unique from other youth organizations in that they offer immediate, barrier-free access to a safe space where kids can explore, learn and play. You don't have to sign up, wait for an available space, apply for a scholarship, or meet eligibility requirements to come to your local library.

At my library we see 50 unattended kids after school every day, in addition to the dozen-or-so teens in our basement teen center and the 35 toddlers that come to storytime every Tuesday and Thursday. These are disproportionately kids who cannot afford, are not eligible, or lack transportation for more traditional after-school and care options like those coordinated through Vermont Afterschool.

My Library is not unique; of the 185 public libraries in Vermont, they all support kids outside of school with a summer reading program, school break activities and after-school support. Many of these libraries are small and rural and do this work with very little funding. Many of these libraries are the last remaining 3rd space, a neutral environment that's not school or home, in their towns as schools continue to consolidate. My point is that libraries are already engaged in this work, are good at this work, and could do it even better with better access to funding support.

It's no accident that our district's after-school organization, Part2, brings all of their students to the Library every Friday as a field trip. We do not receive funding from them, and yet they use the Library as an integral part of their program.

If afterschool support is to be truly universal, then it is critical that libraries are able to access funding through the Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund. I invite all of you to come over to the Kellogg-Hubbard any school day around 3:30 to see this work in action; every possible public computer, every chair and nook and cranny will be filled by a kid who isn't (or can't be) part of an after-school program, but knows they have a second home at their library.

Respectfully,
Carolyn Picazio

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