

To: Senate Committee on Education
From: Nicole Miller, Executive Director, Vermont Afterschool
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Date: February 23, 2026
Re: S.232 – Section 3 (Afterschool and Summer Special Fund)

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 – child care programs, schools, public libraries, parks and recreation, YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, museums, teen centers, and many other youth-serving organizations. 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 and the National Afterschool Association. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about S.232, which I have been following over the last few weeks.

While I wholeheartedly consider public libraries as part of Vermont's afterschool and summer programming landscape, I have concerns about S.232's proposal to set aside a portion of funding for a specific type of entity based on their type.

1. **Libraries are Already Eligible for Act 78 Funding.** The eligibility language of “public, private, or nonprofit organizations” was intentionally flexible to allow any entity to apply, as long as they were using the funds in alignment with the fund's purpose – to expand access to afterschool and summer programming across the state.
2. **Setting a Precedent.** There are many types of entities within Vermont that offer afterschool and summer programming, including, but not limited to: municipal parks and recreation committees or departments, schools (both public and private), child care businesses, libraries, mentoring organizations, career technical centers, museums, teen centers, small and large nonprofits, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, scouting groups, and more. I am concerned we are setting a precedent for additional groups to make the case for a set-aside percentage of the funding, diminishing the State and the Afterschool and Summer Advisory Committee's ability to track progress towards universal afterschool, and to assess needs for programming availability, variety, and quality over the next several years. Additionally, setting aside a portion of funding for a specific group does not allow Vermont's communities to identify the best entities and partners to operate programming in their given community.
3. **Administrative Options.** I would encourage the Committee to allow those involved to explore non-policy options to address the concerns of public libraries and other small programs. There may be ways to shift language within and streamline the application to ensure these programs and entities are able to apply confidently. My experience has been that the Agency has been receptive to feedback about language in

the grant application in the past. I know that they have offered technical assistance to those applying for grants through applicant trainings and answering questions throughout the application process, and that many members of the Afterschool and Summer Advisory Committee have shared the grant opportunity with our email distribution lists. Perhaps there is an opportunity to leverage even more partners, including the Department of Libraries and the Vermont Library Association to increase marketing of the grant announcement and these supports for applicants to ensure that all entities understand the eligibility. Additionally, this item was discussed at the most recent Afterschool and Summer Advisory Committee meeting, chaired by Kendal Smith, who could testify if the Committee desires.

- 4. Successful Application and Implementation.** I know there have been questions from this Committee about whether there have been any afterschool applications and grant funds awarded directly to libraries. While not with Act 78 funds, as previously shared by the Agency of Education, libraries did successfully apply for two grants and upon being awarded a grant, successfully implemented associated programming during the pandemic. These include the Vermont Afterschool-administered Summer Matters for All (*summer 2021*) and Afterschool and Summer Expanding Access grants (*summer 2022, afterschool 2022-2023, and summer 2023*) using federal funding on behalf of the State. Those grants ranged from \$20,000 - \$200,000. We awarded seven public library grants under Summer Matters for All (*Aldrich Public Library, Blake Memorial Library, Franklin Grand Isle Bookmobile, Highgate Library, Maclure Library, Orwell Free Library, and Stamford Town Library*) and seven under the Afterschool and Summer Expanding Access grant (*Blake Memorial Library, Cabot Public Library, City of Burlington Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront and the Fletcher Free Library, Cutler Memorial Library, Jaquith Public Library, Rockingham Free Public Library, and Whitingham Free Public Library*). This demonstrates how libraries are a critical part of the afterschool and summer programming landscape in Vermont, and were able to apply for, receive, and access grant funds.

I believe there is a way forward without updating Act 78 as proposed in S.232, and I am available to work with this committee as you finish working on the bill.

Thank you.