

To: Senate Committee on Government Operations
From: Claire Zandstra, Youth Mental Health Committee Chair of Vermont State Youth Council,
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Date: 2/11/2026

Thank you for being here today. My name is Claire Zandstra and I'm the chair of the Vermont State Youth Council's Youth Mental Health Committee. The Vermont State Youth Council, otherwise known as VSYC, is requesting \$140,000 of state funding to be used by the council for ordinary operations. Currently, we are funded by the federal government and recently we have become concerned that we may be either censored or shut down entirely because of the current administration's previous actions on issues that the council attempts to influence. The VSYC is an important part of how Vermont youth can get involved and get their voices heard in politics. Our recommendations reflect not only our personal voices but also the voices of young people who fill out our survey and come to our public hearings. Last year alone we had 79 youth from across the state fill out our survey which helped us craft recommendations that reflected the values, wants, and needs of many young Vermonters. If we are defunded we won't be able to continue our vital work that helps politicians like you create a state that young people want to live in. This is why it's crucial that you devote \$140,000 to the Vermont State Youth Council as part of Vermont's fiscal year 2027 budget. Thank you for your time.