

To: Senate Committee on Government Operations
From: Finn Sturm, Climate Change Committee Chair of Vermont State Youth Council,
info@vtstateyouthcouncil.org
Date: 2/11/2026

Dear Senate Committee on Government Operations,

I am Finn Sturm, Chair of Climate Change Committee. I'm 15 and live in Saint Albans Vermont.

Human-induced climate change affects all of us - here in Vermont and across the globe. Though impacts vary by region, Vermont is already experiencing dramatic consequences. July 2023 was the warmest July ever recorded worldwide, and that same month our state endured catastrophic flooding, showing how climate-related disasters are becoming more frequent and severe. These events affect our communities, wildlife, ecosystems, and the natural landscapes central to Vermont's identity.

As youth who will inherit this world, we believe we must take part in shaping the solutions. Vermont may be small, but we have the capacity to lead through practical, community-driven action.

The Vermont State Youth Council therefore recommends that the General Assembly:

Expand statewide composting participation by:

- Offering tax incentives for co-ops, garden centers, and other outdoor businesses to accept compost for free and benefit from selling the resulting soil.

Providing residents with compost buckets and establishing a statewide online map of compost drop-off locations.

- Strengthen protection and stewardship of Vermont's forests and recreational trails through increased funding for maintenance, climate-resilient improvements, invasive species management, and post-storm recovery.
- Provide strengthened state support to the Vermont Trails Committee to help coordinate long-term trail planning, maintenance, and stewardship across all regions of the state.
- Prevent forest fragmentation and protect wildlife corridors by supporting conservation policies and land-use practices that maintain connected, healthy ecosystems.

- Support and expand youth environmental stewardship opportunities, engaging young Vermonters in trail work, forestry, conservation, and environmental monitoring. For example, Vermont Youth Conservation Corp and the Audubon Vermont's Youth Conservation Leadership Program.
- Improve sustainable management of high-use trail systems through better signage, visitor education, and targeted infrastructure upgrades to reduce erosion and protect sensitive habitats (e.g, board walks, rocky pathways).

By advancing these actions, Vermont can reduce its negative environmental impact, protect the landscapes we cherish, and safeguard a resilient future for the next generation.

The Youth Council looks forward to working with lawmakers to move these efforts forward.

Respectfully,
The Vermont State Youth Council