



To: Senate Government Operations Committee
From: Aiden Otterman, Youth Voice Chair of Vermont State Youth Council,
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Date: January 30, 2025
Re: Repeal of the State Youth Council Sunset

Hello. I would like to thank you all, the Senate Government Operations Committee, for taking the time to listen to all of our testimonies. My name is Aiden Otterman, I am chair of the Youth Voice Committee for the Vermont State Youth Council, and I currently live in Topsham, Vermont. I am testifying before you today in support of repealing or extending the sunset period of Act 109, an act relating to the creation of the Vermont State Youth Council.

As a first-year member, I can vividly remember the day I met my fellow council members in person in Randolph, Vermont. I remember walking into the Langevin House on the Vermont State University campus in late October of last year, feeling scared out of my mind, wondering if I was even close to qualified to be there. But when I walked in and met my peers for the first time, my worries melted away. I was met with a large group of open-minded, diverse, and professional individuals who wanted nothing more than to make me feel welcome. We spent the rest of that day brainstorming ideas for the future—first in small groups, then committees, and eventually as a whole council. I remember looking around and seeing four or five large post-it boards, each covered top to bottom with sticky notes containing our aspirations for the future. It was overwhelming, but we kept discussing, throwing out ideas left and right, and debating which ones to stick with and which to discard. And we did all of this with Vermont's youth in our hearts and minds. Every idea was welcome and carefully thought through. As a group, we had an unspoken criteria: Is this idea realistic? Would it resonate with Vermont's youth? I remember leaving that day feeling fulfilled. We had to leave early for me to get to a cross-country meet that afternoon. And while I don't want to draw lines where they shouldn't be drawn, I did hit a personal record that day on the course. So, take that as you will.

I wanted to share that personal anecdote with you all to demonstrate that the Vermont State Youth Council has always, and will always, be a trusted, engaged, and professional council. We consistently prove to be an integral part of Vermont's youth civic engagement. As I mentioned earlier, from day one, the members of the State Youth Council have been nothing but kind, intelligent people who know how to get the job done. Whether that job is connecting with our communities or writing well-thought-out recommendations in each of our five committees, we always complete the work to its full



potential. The State Youth Council is one of the most important—and one of the only—ways that Vermont’s youth can effectively participate in their state politics. Our future often lies in the hands of the State Youth Council, its recommendations, and the testimonies we provide to the state. I like to say that we are a platform from which we can lift up the voices of the youth. To me, this is the most important part of it all.

But if the Act 109 sunset comes to a close without being extended or repealed, it will be a day to remember. A day when we’ll remember the loss of the voices of over 100,000 people across our state—around 24% of our population. It is paramount, as members of the Government Operations Committee, to propose legislation to repeal or extend the February 1st sunset period of Act 109. Ideally, we ask that it be repealed or extended to October 1, 2032. A quarter of Vermont’s population stands to lose its only significant voice in state government.

Thank you very much for listening.