



To: Senate Government Operations Committee

From: Claire Zandstra, Youth Mental Health Committee Chair of Vermont State Youth Council,

Claire.Zandstra@VTStateYouthCouncil.Org

Date: January 30, 2025

Re: Repeal of the State Youth Council Sunset

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Thank you all for your time. My name is Claire Zandstra, I'm testifying for the Vermont State Youth Council as the Chair of the Youth Mental Health Committee, and I live in the town of Topsham. Our goal is to have the sunset period on the Vermont State Youth Council repealed or extended to October of 2032. The Vermont State Youth Council is important to the state because we take into consideration what the youth in Vermont are concerned about. We can then make informed recommendations to the legislature that reflect the youth's priorities. Being on the council so far has been a great way for me to connect with people across the state who are my age. It has also helped me meet those who share interests in politics, the state of Vermont, and making a difference in a place where there isn't always a way for young people to have a voice in policy. I cannot stress how essential and crucial having a voice is, not just for my fellow council members but for all youth in Vermont. The council members can help encourage civic participation among young Vermonters, and this helps develop the next generation of political and community leaders who are excited to take part in government. Currently the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows that one



third of students in high schools have poor mental health, and only fifty percent of high school students feel like they play an important part in their communities. Given this, we ask that the Legislature repeal or extend the Sunset period on The Vermont State Youth Council. I promise that I, and the people who will join the council after me, are committed to using our voices to uplift the feelings and thoughts of Vermont Youth. We will aim to support you in continuing to make policies that help young Vermonters thrive and make our beautiful state a great place for kids to grow up. Thank you.