



To: Senate Government Operations Committee
From: Harmony Belle Devoe, Council Chair of Vermont State Youth Council,
Harmony.Devoe@VTStateYouthCouncil.Org
Date: January 30, 2025
Re: Repeal of the State Youth Council Sunset

Hello! My name is Harmony Belle Devoe, and I am the Council Chair of the Vermont State Youth Council. We ask that the Sunset period of Act 109, creating the State Youth Council, be repealed or extended to October 1, 2032.

The Vermont State Youth Council was formed in 2022, with the purpose of providing “young Vermonters an official means of providing advice on policies that impact young persons in Vermont”. This was to ensure “Vermont’s children and young people achieve their potential”, and that “Vermont has open, effective, and inclusive government”.

The Council is currently composed of 26 youth. The Council consists of the following 5 committees, each tasked with providing recommendations that apply to their topics; Youth Voice, Education, Equity and Anti-Racism, Climate Change, and Youth Mental Health. Each committee has a Chair, who are also members of the Executive Committee, which creates agendas and decides priorities for the Council.

Since the Council has been formed, we have written numerous bylaws to outline how the State Youth Council should work. We have also presented recommendations to the General Assembly, and the Governor. We have shared knowledge, and learned from, multiple legislators during our Zoom meetings. We’ve also hosted one public hearing, to better understand what topics Vermonters are wanting legislation to address. Additionally, we have sent out one survey to Vermont students, so the Council can aim to represent all Vermont students’ opinions, not just those of our members.

The State Youth Council plans on presenting more recommendations on legislation that we believe should be passed, and recommending that legislators support certain bills. We plan on speaking with legislators and testifying at the State House more often, when we support, or disagree with proposed legislation. We also plan on holding more public hearings and sending out more surveys to gain a better understanding of Vermonter’s needs.

With so much for the Council to work on during our bi-monthly virtual meetings, it is important for Council members of the future to focus entirely on the State Youth Council’s goals. If the Council has to advocate for the extension of Act 109 too frequently, it will detract from the time needed to craft recommendations, testify on proposed legislation, and uplift the voices of Vermont youth.

The Vermont State Youth Council is important because it bridges the gap between Vermont youth who care to benefit their state, and adult legislators, who are working toward the same goal. As a member of this Council of driven, intelligent, and thoughtful youth advocates, I have felt like the youth of Vermont



have been given a voice that legislators will listen to. This opportunity to participate in Vermont's democracy has been integral in providing me hope for the future of our Vermont communities.

The State Youth Council is also important for the state of Vermont. When working in a system where adults are given the most power it is important that youth have the opportunity to have their opinions taken into account when legislative decisions are being made that affect youth's lives.

Youth make up approximately 24% of Vermont's population. If they were not rightfully represented in the legislature through the State Youth Council, this would mean a large number of Vermonters affected by legislators' decisions, wouldn't have a say in it.

The Council is also carefully chosen to represent the diversity of youth of Vermont, both through location, family backgrounds, and beliefs. This allows for a diverse group of youth to share ideas, and work together toward the goal of benefitting the future of Vermont.

We ask you to repeal or extend until October 1, 2032 the Sunset Period for the Vermont State Youth Council in order to allow Vermont youth to work with legislators to advance the state of Vermont.

Thank you.