

## HISTORY OF VERMONT'S STATE YOUTH COUNCIL

- 2017** In October 2017, close to 40 young people ages 9 to 22 came together to collaboratively draft a Vermont [Youth Declaration of Rights](#). Using only their own ideas and words, they outlined nine focus areas that covered subjects and needs they cared about. They came together from all over Vermont to express their ideas and help broaden the conversation around policy decisions that affect youth.
- 2019** Vermont Afterschool sponsored an international learning exchange with Finnish researchers, youth workers, and the 15-year-old chair of the Helsinki Youth Council. Finland has a long history of youth voice and leadership, including a national law that requires any legislation that affects young people must have input from young people. This visit served as a catalyst to create officially recognized avenues for input and participation from Vermont's youth in policy matters in our state.
- 2020** In January 2020, Rep. Diane Lanpher introduced to the Vermont House [H.775, An act relating to creating the State Youth Council](#).

In January–March 2020, H.775 was referred to the House Committee on Government Operations where [youth testified in support](#). At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, the bill, along with many others in the State House—was put on hold.

To maintain momentum during this delay, Vermont Afterschool, partners, and youth involved in the bill formed the State Youth Advisory Group (SYAG), a group of 40–50 young people ages 12–21 who met through the fall of 2020 with the goal of making recommendations to improve the original State Youth Council bill. In the fall of 2020, SYAG members met with key legislators and champions in the House and Senate to share the youths' recommendations.

*“The Vermont State Youth Council goes beyond the idea that we’re going to inherit the world in which we live. It’s also about the fact that everybody’s voice deserves to be heard. **Youth deserve to have their voices and opinions heard.**”*

–Joshua Stearns,  
Former Chair, Vermont  
State Youth Council

**2021** After incorporating many of SYAG's recommendations, Reps Diane Lanpher and Mike Mrowicki co-sponsored [H.293, An act relating to creating the State Youth Council](#) in January 2021.

Throughout the legislative process, youth and key partners testified on behalf of the bill. The Vermont Department of Health agreed to cover the cost of the stipends for State Youth Council members and the costs of any training or other support through their existing budget. And the Youth State Advisory Council, a group of organizations and partners supporting youth, agreed to provide coaching and logistical support for the State Youth Council.

**2022** H.293 passed the full House in March 2022, the Senate in April 2022, and was signed into law as Act 109 by Governor Phil Scott on May 11, 2022.

Vermont's State Youth Council held its inaugural full-day meeting Tuesday, December 13, 2022, at the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier and continues to meet monthly to prepare its annual advice and recommendations for Governor Phil Scott and the General Assembly on policies that impact young Vermonters.

**2024** The Council delivered its inaugural [Recommendations on Policies that Impact Youths in Vermont](#) to Governor Scott, the Senate Committee on Government Operations, and the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs on January 30, 2024.

**2026** The Vermont State Youth Council is scheduled to sunset on February 1, 2026, per Act 109.

*“Democracy is as strong as the diversity of the people it empowers. The State Youth Council strengthens Vermont’s democracy by expanding the experiences present in the political process.”*

-Una Fonte, State Youth Advisory Group member

For more information about the Vermont State Youth Council, please see their website at <https://www.vtstateyouthcouncil.org/>.