

To: Joint Fiscal Committee  
From: Nicole Miller, Executive Director, Vermont Afterschool  
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Date: September 18, 2025  
Re: Federal Funding Impacts

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Good afternoon. My name is Nicole Miller, and I'm the Executive Director of Vermont Afterschool, a statewide nonprofit dedicated to strengthening and expanding access to afterschool programs, empowering youth, and transforming communities so all Vermont youth are active, engaged, connected, and heard. As the lead organization in Vermont for out-of-school time programs, we provide a wide range of professional development and career pathways, support for start-up programs, and ongoing high-quality program improvement. We also provide resources and technical assistance to amplify youth voice across a variety of settings – in afterschool and other out-of-school time programs and spaces, within communities through the Vermont Youth Project as a way to support upstream primary prevention, and at the state level through the Vermont State Youth Council. Vermont Afterschool works primarily with afterschool and summer program professionals, and directly with youth through the State Youth Council and other youth empowerment projects. Much of this work is federally funded.

This summer, we witnessed the fragility of Vermont's afterschool and summer program landscape when the Federal Administration withheld \$6.5 million for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, a key part of Vermont's afterschool and summer program landscape, serving nearly 11,000 youth across 94 locations. We heard from hundreds of Vermonters about their concerns for these funds being withheld as they provide safe spaces, engaging programs, supportive adults, access to food, and many other services. And, importantly for Vermont's caregivers and workforce, a peace of mind, ultimately benefiting Vermont's economy during non-school hours when many caregivers are still at work. These funds also support Vermont Afterschool's work in partnership with the Agency of Education to provide professional development and technical assistance to these 21C-funded programs. Thankfully, these funds were restored on July 18<sup>th</sup>. But they illustrate our concern.

Here in Vermont, we have four core funding sources for afterschool and summer programs:

1. 21C funds mentioned above (Nita M. Lowey 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center funds);
2. Child Care Development Block Grant, in which 43% of all children served through subsidy in Vermont are school-age;
3. Act 76 funds, our transformational child care law, expanding access and eligibility; and
4. Act 78 funds, dedicated to expanding afterschool and summer programs, especially in underserved areas of the State.

Without any one of these funding sources, we would lose significant capacity in the afterschool and summer system, which already does not ensure every child or youth who wants or needs to attend a program can do so. Recent data from the [Afterschool Alliance](#) shows:

- 9 in 10 voters agree that afterschool programs are an absolute necessity for communities;

- 91% of voters agree that afterschool programs give parents peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised;
- 89% agree that they prevent risky behaviors and exposure to negative influences in-person and online; and
- 89% agree that afterschool programs strengthen the economy.

The White House has proposed that the 21C funds be essentially eliminated in FY26, and even if approved, the Administration may again try to disrupt the funds and the essential services they provide. For now, the federal child care funding has been left alone, but we continue to monitor it closely.

Additionally, many other federal funds impact these spaces, including SNAP, Medicaid, funding for libraries, and AmeriCorps, to name a few. Vermont's Universal School Meals program has also helped to close the meal gap after school and over the summer. More programs than ever are qualifying for these federal programs and are able to provide quality nutrition to kids outside of the school day. Threats to 21C funding, SNAP, and Medicaid could compromise the availability of these essential meals and snacks, which are crucial for ensuring child food security and preventing learning loss.

As another example, in recent weeks, the Vermont Department of Health received a letter of non-compliance from the US Department of Health and Human Services about removing all content related to gender identity from a curriculum aimed at providing education to adolescents about pregnancy and health related to sexual activity. Vermont Afterschool has a grant through VDH to support this work happening in youth-serving organizations across the state, with those implementing sites providing safe spaces for authentic conversations for youth about their sexual health. We are grateful that VDH is working to identify a solution and has affirmed its commitment to evidence-based public health programs that reflect the needs of all Vermonters, including the LGBTQIA+ community.

Now is the time to plan for this impact on children and youth, caregivers, and Vermont's workforce. While we understand Vermont may not be able to replace the critical 21C or the Child Care Development Block Grant, I urge you to, at a minimum, protect the investments made in Act 76 and Act 78.

Thank you.