

Testimony before the Vermont House and Senate Committees
on Appropriations, St. Johnsbury School, February 15, 2016

Hello, my name is Jim Flint. I live in Craftsbury and serve as the executive director of Wonder & Wisdom, a community nonprofit based in Greensboro. Our organization provides afterschool and summer learning programs for rural kids from Greensboro, Greensboro Bend, Stannard, Craftsbury, and neighboring towns. Thank you for holding this budget hearing and taking public testimony.

In testifying today, I bring two requests: First, that the legislature support the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Special Fund with an appropriation of \$2.5 million, and second, that funding levels for the childcare family assistance program be increased. These two measures will help low income families access quality childcare, including afterschool programs and summer learning. More than 50% of the children who attend our afterschool program in Greensboro are in a tenuous low income situation. Without childcare subsidies, families in poverty could not afford the basic program fees. Without children, our afterschool program would cease.

88% of Vermont families support public funding for afterschool and summer learning. Yet in many cases, the cost for small rural school districts and struggling nonprofits to offer quality programming is prohibitive, especially when serving children and families living in poverty. Public funding support is vital.

Providing safe and nurturing places for children to continue learning, while parents finish their work days, is essential to Vermont's economy and the health of small and large communities. In addition, children and youth who are actively involved with afterschool and summer learning programs receive healthy snacks and meals, participate in fun physical activities, and engage hands-on in STEM topics.

I greatly appreciate the legislature's support for education initiatives that happen during and beyond school hours. I urge the Governor and the Appropriations committees to allocate FY17 funds to the Expanded Learning Opportunities Special Fund, and to increase childcare subsidy levels. These measures will help service providers meet the afterschool and summer needs of Vermont kids, especially children from our highest need families.

Thank you,

Jim Flint, Executive Director

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