

Chairman Holmberg and members of the Appropriation Committee. It is my pleasure to stand before you and introduce SB2257. This bill would provide additional funding resources for afterschool programs across our state. This is a safety issue as well as an educational need for the children of our state. With the Covid pandemic, the increase for afterschool and childcare services has only increased. Our first responders and frontline workers need their children to be in safe and enrolled in supervised facilities when they are working.

This bill asks for an appropriation of 3.5 million dollars to provide support for the sections of the state that need afterschool programming and the children who are currently on a waiting list of existing programs. We also need to address the needs of families that do not generally qualify as a low income but because of Covid find themselves unable to pay for these programs in full.

I think this appropriation is important for the safety of elementary age children. When parents are not able to find after school supervision for their children, all too often they are given a key and go home alone to wait for their parents to get off work. These situations are so unpredictable because despite a child's mature level or the comfortable level of their parents there are always unforeseen dangers with a younger child being left at home alone.

When most people think of afterschool programming, they assume this is a babysitting service. Nothing could be farther from the truth. These programs provide help with homework, provide enrichment opportunities, craft projects, supervised play outside, story time, tutoring and a nutritious snack. Most importantly, they are supervised by multiple adults.

At the current time, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) receives a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant of approximately 6 million dollars from the Federal government which provides funding for afterschool programming for children. DPI allocates \$1,125 per pupil to each of these afterschool programs with the parents providing the rest of the fee, if they charge a fee at all. A portion of this grant money is kept by DPI for the administration of this program. This 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program is targeting lower income families and often has a waiting list. Presently, there are 11 grantees that are receiving 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant Funding. There are approximately 4,000 children who attend this program 30 days or more and over 7,000 children who attend on an occasional basis. Although those numbers seem high, this does not even begin to cover the need within the state. DPI has requests from other entities that would like support for their programs and there are many rural areas who do not have access to any programming.

An appropriation of 3.5 million dollars would allow an additional 3,000 children to participate in afterschool programming. I ask this committee to give careful consideration to the funding of additional afterschool programs across the state and hope that you will send this bill to the floor with a do pass recommendation.

I will stand for questions at this time.