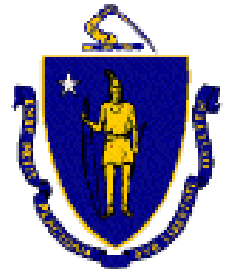


THE MASSACHUSETTS AFTER SCHOOL AND OUT OF SCHOOL TIME COMMISSION

Senator Thomas McGee and Representative Marie St. Fleur
Co-Chairs



The Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time Announces Public Hearing

Special Commission to Convene Sixth Public Hearing in Dartmouth, July 19, 5 PM - 8 PM

Boston, Massachusetts - July 12, 2007 — The Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time announces its sixth public hearing to be held at the University of Massachusetts—Dartmouth, 285 Old Westport Road, in North Dartmouth on Thursday, July 19 from 5 PM - 8 PM in the Woodland Community Commons Conference Rooms 1 & 2. Before the public hearing, from 3 PM—4 PM, the Special Commission members will be visiting the Sgt. William H. Carney Memorial Academy's summer program. Located at 247 Elm Street in New Bedford, the Carney Academy serves 60 elementary school students over a 5 week period emphasizing project-based learning to address the loss of learning that can occur over the summer.

This Special Commission was created by the Massachusetts Legislature to "study and recommend how to 'define and 'better coordinate, expand, finance and improve accessible, affordable, and quality out of school time programming for school age children in all settings in Massachusetts."

Led by Senator Thomas McGee (D-Lynn), the Chair of the Senate's Labor and Workforce Development Committee and Representative Marie St. Fleur (D-Boston), the Vice-Chair of the House Committee on Ways and Means, the 36 member Commission has committed to holding ten public hearings throughout the state to gather input about the Commonwealth's afterschool system. Youth, parents, community and faith-based providers, law enforcement officials, educators, funders, business and other community leaders are expected to attend and provide testimony.

"We have a historic opportunity to gain a better understanding of the importance of afterschool programs in the lives of children, youth and families," said Senator Thomas McGee. "Since a quality workforce is a linchpin of the afterschool system, we need to identify solutions to strengthen it. We look forward to gathering information from the public hearings and site visits that will help us figure out this and other ways to better serve children and youth when they are not in school."

"Currently, Massachusetts provides afterschool programs to approximately 20% of the Commonwealth's school age population," noted Representative Marie St. Fleur. "It is well documented that the time period between 2PM and 6PM is the most hazardous, if unsupervised, for children of that age. It is clear that we need to closely examine how public/private partnerships can leverage existing resources to serve more children and youth to coordinate and strengthen a system of afterschool and expanded learning that promotes their healthy development. The public hearings and site visits will help us to hear from all stakeholders on this important matter."

"There are many reasons why afterschool and summer programs are critical for New Bedford's children", said Bob French, the Director of Policy and Program Development for NorthStar Learning Centers. "School engagement and extended opportunities to learn skills are so important - particularly over the summer where children traditionally lose ground academically. There has also been a lot of gun violence in New Bedford and this can discourage parents from letting their kids go outside. Afterschool programs offer a safe and enriching alternative to staying at home."

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1.1 Million School Aged Children and Youth in Massachusetts

There are 1.1 million school aged children and youth ages 5-18 that live in Massachusetts. Of that group, 720,000 are children ages 5-13 and 380,000 are youth ages 14-19. Current state funding serves 205,500 children and youth leaving nearly 80% without access to quality and enriching after-school and summer opportunities.

The Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time intends to study this issue more in-depth. In addition to holding the nine public hearings, it will also convene three working groups that will 1) analyze information and access issues; 2) identify quality, workforce and professional development concerns, and 3) determine how the afterschool system in the Commonwealth can be sustained. The Special Commission expects to issue a report in the fall of 2007 that will have recommendations in these areas which will strengthen the Commonwealth's afterschool system.

About The Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time

The Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time has been created 'to study and recommend how to' define and 'better coordinate, expand, finance and improve accessible, affordable, and quality out-of-school time programming for school age children in all settings in Massachusetts.'

The Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time

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