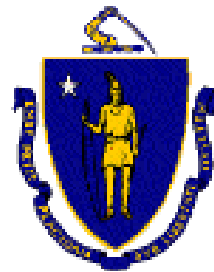


THE MASSACHUSETTS AFTER SCHOOL AND OUT OF SCHOOL TIME COMMISSION

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 Fourth Public Hearing in Framingham, May 29, 5 PM - 8 PM

Boston, Massachusetts - May 22, 2007 — The Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time announces its fourth public hearing to be held at the Cameron Middle School, 215 Elm Street, in Framingham on Tuesday, May 29, 2007 from 5 PM - 8 PM in the auditorium. Prior to the public hearing, members of the Special Commission will be touring the MetroWest YMCA's High Flight Program from 3 PM - 4 PM at their Hopkinton Branch located at 45 East Street. The High Flight program is an adventure based afterschool program that promotes leadership, self-confidence and social skills for youth and teens ages 12-17.

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 at least nine 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."

The MetroWest YMCA's "High Flight" program for teens, which Special Commission members will witness in action, is "a unique and effective program using outdoor adventure challenges,

group work and counseling to literally save the lives of the participants lucky enough to have the opportunity to participate," said Richard A. MacPherson, Director of Operations. "I have seen the impact first hand and have heard from parents their emotional testimonials about how this program has changed the life of their son or daughter." MacPherson further noted that, "It is our collective responsibility to work together to make the most effective use of our resources in order to support our kids and our families in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This Special Commission created by the state legislature to study the problems and to explore future strategies is both timely and essential."

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 afterschool 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.'

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