

Thursday, Nov. 15, 2007

**LOCATION, TRANSPORTATION REMAIN ROADBLOCKS FOR AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS:** Parents and their kids looking to participate in after-school and out-of-school programs have trouble finding information on the programs, as well as getting to them, a legislative panel says in a report that's attracting attention today on Beacon Hill. The Special Commission on After-School and Out-of-School Time, chaired by Rep. Marie St. Fleur and Sen. Thomas McGee, says the lack of information ends up limiting access and reducing participation in the programs, which include youth centers, intramural sports leagues, libraries and parks and recreation facilities. The report points out that more than 200,000 children, about 20 percent of school-age children, participate in after-school and out-of-school time activities, and notes that no comprehensive data collection system exists. "There is no ongoing way to measure supply of or demand for programs statewide, nor is there a way to analyze gaps in service by age, by time of day, or by neighborhood," the report says. About 18 state agencies provide some type of service for children ages 5 to 19, but information gaps are widest for programs serving 14 to 18-year-olds, according to the report. The report recommends increasing program access to underserved populations, especially low-income children, gay and lesbian kids and ethnic and racial minorities. The report also calls for promoting more use of public buildings, studying existing transportation systems to find out to better use them for the programs, and building a web-based information technology system for policymakers and consumers on the number of children served, a rating system, training and grant opportunities, and a database of programs throughout the state. The special commission will discuss its report in Nurses Hall at 3 pm.

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Friday, Nov. 16, 2007

**REPORT: LACK OF INFO ON AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS A ROADBLOCK FOR PARENTS:** Parents and their kids looking to participate in after-school and out-of-school programs have trouble finding information on the programs, as well as getting to them, a legislative panel says in a report released this week. The Special Commission on After-School and Out-of-School Time, chaired by Rep. Marie St. Fleur (D-Boston) and Sen. Thomas McGee (D-Lynn), says the lack of information ends up limiting access and reducing participation in the programs, which include youth centers, intramural sports leagues, libraries and parks and recreation facilities. [After School Special Commission Report](#)

## **REPORT: LACK OF INFO ON AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS A ROADBLOCK FOR PARENTS**

By Gintautas Dumcius

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, NOV. 15, 2007.....Parents and their kids looking to participate in after-school and out-of-school programs have trouble finding information on the programs, as well as getting to them, a legislative panel says in a report released this week.

The Special Commission on After-School and Out-of-School Time, chaired by Rep. Marie St. Fleur (D-Boston) and Sen. Thomas McGee (D-Lynn), says the lack of information ends up limiting access and reducing participation in the programs, which include youth centers, intramural sports leagues, libraries and parks and recreation facilities.

The 36-member commission met for six months across the state, including gatherings in Dartmouth, Pittsfield and Framingham and at 10 after-school and out-of-time programs.

The report says more than 200,000 children, about 20 percent of school-age children, participate in after-school and out-of-school time activities, and notes that no comprehensive data collection system exists. "Those opportunities are critical to their continued development," St. Fleur said. "Right now, not many of them have that opportunity."

According to the report, "there is no ongoing way to measure supply of or demand for programs statewide, nor is there a way to analyze gaps in service by age, by time of day, or by neighborhood."

About 18 state agencies provide some type of service for children ages 5 to 19, but information gaps are widest for programs serving 14 to 18-year-olds, the report says.

The report recommends increasing program access to underserved populations, especially low-income children, , gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth, and ethnic and racial minorities.

"After school can't be an afterthought," said Rick Metters, executive director of the Massachusetts Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs' Woburn office. "I think inaction's a choice, [but] inaction has a price," he added.

The report calls for promoting more use of public buildings, maximizing the use of federal grants, studying existing transportation systems to find out how to better use them for the programs, and building a web-based information technology system for policymakers and consumers on the number of children served. It also recommends a program rating system, training and grant opportunities, and a database of programs throughout the state.

"The private sector must step up and help out also" with money to pay for more programs, St. Fleur said.

The state budgeted \$93.5 million in funding for after-school and out-of-school programs in fiscal year 2006.

St. Fleur and McGee plan to file a bill soon setting up a "coordinating council" to keep the issue on the front burner, she said.

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