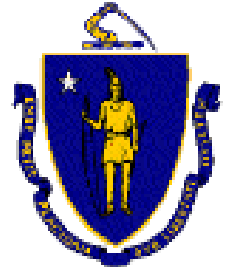


# THE MASSACHUSETTS AFTER SCHOOL AND OUT OF SCHOOL TIME COMMISSION

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 Ninth Public Hearing in Lynn, September 20,  
5 PM - 8 PM

**Boston, Massachusetts - September 19, 2007** — The Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time announces its ninth public hearing to be held at the North Shore Community College on Thursday, September 20 from 5 PM - 8 PM in the Gymnasium of the McGee Building located at 300 Broad Street in Lynn. Before the public hearing, from 3 PM—4 PM, the Special Commission members will be visiting the Gregg House and Girls, Inc. of Lynn, located at 106 Broad Street and 112 Market Street in Lynn respectively. The Gregg House is a program that serves 280 children annually ages 5 through 13; they have 300 children on their waiting list for services. Girls Inc., of Lynn operates afterschool programs for girls ages 6—18.

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."

"What people don't realize is that school-aged afterschool programs are just as important as public school", said Kelly O'Connor, Director of the School-Aged Program at the Gregg Neighborhood House. "We spend on average 4.5 hours with a child and they spend 5 hours in public school. We closely align our activities with the Massachusetts Department of Education's curriculum frameworks to ensure that each child receives a quality learning experience. Kids should have the best you have to offer them." O'Connor further added that many of their staff participate in the North Shore Community College's School Aged Child Care Certificate Program. "We are glad that the Special Commission is particularly focusing on the issue of workforce and professional development. Sometimes the field does not get the important recognition it deserves."

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"We strongly believe that girls need gender specific programming and space to address their unique needs," said Pat Driscoll, Executive Director of Girls Inc. in Lynn. "They are in coed settings 99% of the time and programming like ours allows them to further increase their confidence to learn and do things they did not think were possible for them." Driscoll further added that their programs are set up so that girls can come in and out at any point and still receive a quality learning experience. "We meet them where they are," Driscoll commented. "It is important as they get older that they have a more individualized learning experience. Afterschool programs for middle and older youth need to be about that in order for them to be engaged and to participate."

### **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."

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

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