

Madalyn Letellier

From: John Froio [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2026 6:56 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Ben Wheeler
Subject: Comments for Finance Committee meeting on 6/10/26

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Good evening, Councilors. My name is John Froio, and I serve as the Deputy Director of De Novo, a legal aid and mental health organization that serves residents of Somerville. For context, I have been with De Novo for 26 years—spending my first 15 years as a housing attorney, and the past 11 years as part of the leadership team helping to run the organization.

I am here tonight to ask you to approve Item #26-0874, which would allow the Office of Housing Stability to carry forward \$127,358 of its FY26 allocation into FY27. I also urge your support for the allocation of \$1,000,000 from the Community Benefits Fund to OHS for rental assistance and legal services.

I want to begin by recognizing the City, through OHS, for building an innovative housing safety net—one that is truly a pioneer in affordable housing preservation and homelessness prevention. This model has set a high standard for what is possible when a municipality takes a comprehensive and coordinated approach to homelessness prevention—and could be a national model.

When I represented clients as housing attorney, there was only so much we could do. We lacked the capacity to help tenants organize, to connect them with rental assistance, and to provide the intensive case management that is often critical to keeping someone stably housed.

Somerville has created a model that brings all of these resources together. The City has become the hub that connects legal services, financial assistance, and case management—and the results have been transformative in helping residents remain in their homes.

One example of what this model makes possible is a recent successful jury trial in which De Novo represented a low-income tenant in Somerville and helped keep them safely housed. That outcome would not have been possible without the partnership and support of the Office of Housing Stability, our community partner CAAS, De Novo, and, of course, the client—who benefited from this comprehensive safety net.

I urge you to continue supporting these initiative.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

John A. Froio, Esquire
Deputy Director
De Novo

[REDACTED]

Cambridge, MA 02141

[REDACTED]

Madalyn Letellier

From: Steve Huff [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2026 9:47 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public comment for 2026-06-10 Finance Committee meeting

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Hello folks! Steve Huff, Ward 5.

Please reject the current budget proposed by Mayor Wilson.

I am less concerned about the specific policy priorities encoded in this budget (although there are a number with which I disagree) and more concerned that the City Council does not perform effective oversight of the budget process. Last year was, in fact, the first time in several years that I can remember the Council offering anything other than token resistance to the Mayor's agenda: from my perspective, the Council voted to cut the line item funding the CAO, then the Mayor came to the next Council meeting and gave the Councilors a stern talking-to, and then a number of Councilors changed their votes and the Mayor got her way.

Watching this spectacle did not engender confidence that the Council has any appetite for holding this new Mayor accountable. However, there are a number of new faces on the Council this year, and I remain hopeful.

Please assert the oversight authority that you have. The City and our neighbors would be better served by a mayor who actively involves the Council in formulating policy, but this will not happen so long as successive mayors can be confident that the Council will rubber-stamp their budgets.

Thank you for your time and attention.

-Steve Huff
Ward 5

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<http://five.sentenc.es>

Madalyn Letellier

From: Crystal Huff [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2026 6:05 AM
To: All City Council; Public Comments
Subject: My comment from tonight (plus what I had to cut short)

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My name is Crystal Huff, my pronouns are they/them, and I live in Ward 5.

In Somerville, we're trying to make an ever-better, more accessible community, I hope. We care about the impact of our decisions on our neighbors -- not just in the Year of the Neighbor, but every year.

I am honestly pained by where we are at now. Maybe someone can generate metrics of why we continue to decrease crime in the city but somehow need more police -- that certainly seems the direction this budget goes. The metrics I care about at this point are how many people I know who are sleeping in cars or on couches because they can't afford a \$600/month increase in rent annually, and how many of my friends and neighbors are being deported or "self-deporting" every month. Until those metrics go down to zero, I am going to continue to ask that we give less money to the police union and more money to housing assistance, food security, education for the next generation, sustainability efforts, and inspectional services -- ISD, because I believe that is a necessary step prior to being able to implement rent control.

I can't effectively argue for those goals in the space of two minutes -- it's too much. I'd become even less coherent.

Instead, I'm using my remaining time in the hearing tonight to ask city council to help meet the minimum requirement of explaining the budget to the public. I can't believe this is where we're at, but this is where we're at.

I think residents deserve to be able to compare last year's budget to this year's budget without becoming full-time students of the process. It sure looks like there's even more money budgeted for policing next year, between moving COHR out of the Somerville police budget and some positions/functions being funded by grants and not accounting for proposed changes to the police budget that would go into effect if the city council accepts the contract that Mayor Jake has been negotiating with the police union. I'm shocked that we're proposing to do that expansion of police pay while laying off non-police staff in housing and youth support.

I also don't think explaining our city budget and department goals should be a 3-meeting process. I don't see marathon meetings as accessible to the public, and I know I'm not alone in that view. Tuesday night, 4 departments were covered in 20 minutes -- that's not accessible or informative, to my view. Councilor

Wheeler, I am begging you, please give more time to explaining the budget and city department functions and goals to us residents. You have the power.

If a budget is documentation of our moral compass, as has so often been said in city hall, I have no idea where this year's compass is leading us. And I really try to understand this stuff.

If we can't understand the changes proposed to our budget and our staff org chart, then it's not possible to consent to them. Meaningful consent means understanding what you're going to do.

I think that if city councilors and actively engaged residents don't leave budget meetings with a healthy understanding of what the budget is allocated toward next year, such that you can explain it in your own words to everyone else, then you shouldn't vote to accept it, and it is your imperative to veto the budget at that point. For all our sakes.

PS - the city council salaries have not changed since 2022, or possibly longer, I honestly forget. Insert the gif of "it has been 1000 years" here. Since 2022, inflation has increased 13.8%. That's a huge effective decrease in pay for councilors. That's not what I see as a moral stance on public service, either, and most people wouldn't be able to live in Somerville on that low pay. If we want wider community participation in civic life, including our elected officials, I think we need to make it possible for city staff and city officials to be paid a living wage. I am shocked that Jake Wilson argued and voted last year to increase councilor pay yet hasn't implemented that now that it's fully in his power.

Best,

Crystal M. Huff
Ward 5 Resident

Madalyn Letellier

From: Pirie Ungerleider [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2026 11:54 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Comment RE: Budget - Finance Committee/City Council hearings
Attachments: Public Comment - Budget.docx

This email is from an external source. Use caution responding to it, opening attachments or clicking links.

From: Alex Pirie, [REDACTED]. Ward 6, Precinct 1. Text below and same text in the attachment.

Thanks for your consideration!

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A little over twenty years ago I had a desk in the Health and Human Services office, then at the TAB building. I came in one morning and found our receptionist, Jeanie, in tears. I asked what's the matter? She pointed to her computer screen. There was a web page displayed, "In the Arms of an Angel." Paul, a Somerville student, had posted a picture of himself with his cousin Matty O'Brien. Matty was among the first in a shocking wave of youth overdoses and youth suicides in Somerville in the early two thousands. Tearful mornings at HHS continued as Paul added photos and biographies of our newly dead children.

In response a city taskforce group was formed and the Youth Risk Behavior survey was instituted as a yearly project. Teen Empowerment was commissioned to write a report on youth programming in the city, and the organization was eventually hired to open Somerville's own Teen Empowerment. Money was invested in additional youth programming and we moved on. Only later did I learn about our earlier horrible angel dust addiction and suicide years in the 1970's – an earlier phase of a deadly and dreadful cycle.

At a recent meeting of the Somerville Youth Workers Network it was noted that Somerville has, over the years, developed a cycle of harm, remediation and benefit, then not maintaining the remediation, and sliding back into harm – a cycle and a habit that does none of us any good and sacrifices our children.

The improvement of conditions for our youth through remediation, through thoughtful and extensive programming, and through ad hoc community efforts – works. It works particularly well if we listen to youth voices. I'm reminded of the Lexington Park community dispute and the role of Save Our Somerville (tip of the hat to the Councilor from Ward One!) in its

resolution. Supported healing is possible, and, more importantly, necessary, if we are to continue to be a community that prioritizes the well-being of our young.

The case in point: after considerable argument and angry graffiti during a youth/adult dispute there was a Lexington Park/SOS/city meeting where the city admitted to an initial inadequate community process but then said nothing could be done to change things because the park's neighborhood was technically too wealthy. One of the youth representatives said, "Well, if the city can spend thirty thousand dollars so dogs can (expletive deleted) on Vinal Ave. what does that say about us kids?" p.s. money was found and Lexington Park was made more accommodating for everyone. The new look included a mural project which was followed by another at the Morse-Kelly playground, the arts community benefited as well!

At a time when things are (relatively! and crossing my fingers) calm we should be prioritizing the programs and maintaining the services that successfully work for our youth.

We should be adding another youth social worker, not cutting the position.

We should continue to fully fund Teen Empowerment.

And we could make a greater effort to support the strong work of Parks and Rec through a better use of city-owned buildings.

The Cummings School is right there in the right place, mid-city – more centrally located and available than the Edgerly. It could be reconceptualized as a community resource center serving our youth as a home for teens, afterschool programming, and a number of other community needs. The Cummings could be restored for civic use at the same time as the fire house at Cross and Broadway is made ADA compliant on the second floor to provide more youth and adult access. We can make these simple investments to support our children and continue to break the cycle!

Submitted by Alex Pirie, [REDACTED] Ward 6, Precinct 1. Somerville.

Madalyn Letellier

From: Patrik Farris [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, June 12, 2026 12:36 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Written Public Comment Submission – Teen Empowerment Funding
Attachments: Written Public Comment Submission – Teen Empowerment Funding.pdf

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Dear City Clerk and Members of the City Council,

My name is Pat Farris, and I am the Lead Program Coordinator at Teen Empowerment Somerville.

I am submitting written testimony for City Council consideration regarding the proposed budget allocations for youth programming and the impact of Teen Empowerment on youth and the broader Somerville community.

Included with this email are written testimonies from current and former Youth Organizers, youth participants, and Teen Empowerment staff. Many of these individuals prepared remarks for public comment but were unable to speak due to time constraints at yesterday's City Council meeting. We are submitting these statements to ensure their voices are included in the public record as part of the Council's ongoing budget discussions.

Per submission requirements, my full name, ward, and relevant item are listed below:

Full Name: Patrik Farris
Ward/Address: Ward 1
Item: Teen Empowerment funding / youth programming budget allocations

Thank you,

--

Patrik Farris
Lead Program Coordinator
The Center for Teen Empowerment, Inc.
[REDACTED]



TEEN EMPOWERMENT
— SOMERVILLE —

Dear Members of the City Council,

I hope you are doing well. I'm writing to share testimony statements from our staff and several young people involved with Teen Empowerment regarding the proposed budget allocations and the impact this program has had on their lives and the broader Somerville community.

Many of these youth prepared remarks for public comment but were unable to speak due to time constraints at the meeting. We wanted to ensure their voices were still heard and included in the public record as you continue budget discussions.

Please find their testimonies below.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Pat Farris
Lead Program Coordinator
Teen Empowerment Somerville



TEEN EMPOWERMENT
— SOMERVILLE —

Testimony from Pat Farris, Lead Program Coordinator

My name is Pat Farris. I'm the Lead Program Coordinator, and a former Youth Organizer, at Teen Empowerment. We appreciate the council having us here today as our young people share their thoughts on the city's current allocations for youth programming.

Thirteen years ago, I was one of those young people writing letters to this same council under similar circumstances. At the time, I was facing chronic illness, family addiction, exposure to violence, food insecurity, and the ever-growing threat of being priced out of Somerville.

The one place where I felt truly safe, understood, and respected was at risk of closing its doors. Thankfully, Teen Empowerment survived. It continued to uplift my generation, and it helped me build a meaningful life. I am standing here today not only as a staff member, but as proof of what sustained investment in young people can make possible.

Some of the issues we faced back then have changed. Some have taken new forms. But many still demand our attention, our resources, and our courage. Across my time at Teen Empowerment, I've worked with hundreds of young people, and I often hear what many in positions of authority do not.

I hear from students at my former high school who feel like they've been banished to a basement. I hear from graduating seniors who know they have little chance of remaining in the only community they have ever known. I hear from young people who have lost loved ones to drugs and are still expected to carry the weight of school, work, family, and survival. I hear from immigrant youth who are afraid to leave the house and, because of that fear, cannot access the very programs meant to support them.

We understand that the city budget is tight. But young people still need deep, consistent community investment. Programs like Teen Empowerment are not supplemental. They are not nice-to-haves. They are truly lifelines.

At this time, we are not sure why our program is losing its funding, or how that came to be, but we would welcome further conversation with city leadership about this decision. We ask the council to recognize the real impact this funding has had, and the real harm that may come if it disappears.

Thank you.

The Center for Teen Empowerment, Inc.





TEEN EMPOWERMENT
— SOMERVILLE —

Testimony from Silvia Arriaza, Program Coordinator

Good evening,

My name is Silvia Arriaza, and I am a Program Coordinator at Teen Empowerment.

I am here today to ask that funding for Teen Empowerment be maintained.

When I joined Teen Empowerment, I made it my mission to help create a safe and supportive space where young people feel heard, valued, and empowered. Alongside our dedicated staff, I have had the privilege of watching youth grow in remarkable ways.

I've seen young people develop confidence, leadership skills, and meaningful connections with their peers. One youth came to our program struggling with severe anxiety and often doubted his ability to speak in front of others. Through the support, mentorship, and opportunities provided by Teen Empowerment, he went on to perform at our Peace Conference in front of more than 100 people.

I've also watched youth who barely knew each other build lasting friendships, support one another, and become active leaders in their neighborhood.

These transformations don't happen by accident. They happen because Teen Empowerment invests in young people and gives them the tools to create positive change in their lives and in our community.

I ask you: Why cut funding for a program that is helping young people grow into confident, connected, and engaged leaders?

Thank you for your time and consideration.





TEEN EMPOWERMENT
— SOMERVILLE —

Testimony from Marmensa Bazalais, Mystic Housing Development

Hi everyone,

My name is Marmensa Bazalais. I'm a junior at Somerville High School, a youth organizer at TE, and I thank you guys for having me.

I think Teen Empowerment is super important to our community because it allows us teens in Somerville to share our voices and speak out for ourselves, and others like me and my peers are able to do it right now.

Personally, Teen Empowerment has helped me build financial independence, especially since it was kinda my first job. Through TE, I learned to spend my money meaningfully and save for things in the future. I think finance is something that everyone should be learning at an early stage of their life, especially due to the state of the economy at the moment.

I know there's also many other jobs like retail, fast food, etc. where teens can also earn money. However, TE does more than just financial stability. TE gives us a community and support that is unmatched. I've gotten resources for college, bosses who not only care about the work that I do for them but also my future specifically outside of high school, and even other job opportunities and internships. These things give me the space to truly grow and build confidence.

I wholeheartedly believe that TE is worth investing in because the money goes into our future, which I'd hope you guys are extremely considerate of because teens are the future.





Testimony from Bazel Towne, Winter Hill

Good evening, everyone.

My name is Bazel, and I worked as a Youth Organizer at Teen Empowerment this year. I wish I were here to deliver this message personally, but I hope just as strongly that it is delivered all the same.

Teen Empowerment has existed as a testament to what youth can accomplish when given the opportunity. From local events to rallies, collaborations, and content, their presence has been made known for the past twenty-two years.

The origin of T.E. Somerville dates back to 2004, when sites began to branch out from Boston. It was a direct response to the youth crime rates that spiked between 2:00 to 6:00 P.M., right after school. Accordingly, the hours that Youth Organizers work run from 3:30 to 5:30. This caused a 50 percent reduction in juvenile crime, founded by Dr. Russell Schutt at UMass Boston.

Teen Empowerment is more than just its events and numbers—it is rooted in the youth, who are constantly blindsided by our city. T.E.'s Youth Organizers are often chosen through interviews that create camaraderie between candidates, but another factor is the struggles each person faces. In many cases, Teen Empowerment has deterred youth from engaging in harmful activities because they honestly care. We teach our youth to learn from, create, and inspire our community.

Still, Teen Empowerment cannot host as many events or hire as many youth if there is a lack of money put into it. This budget cut is a substantial risk to us, but I am confident that the voices we have built are proof of why T.E. is more than deserving of Somerville's support.

In 2013, our budget was threatened to be cut. Still, T.E. and its youth persevered. It was the same passion and commitment we lead with now that allowed us to endure multiple budget cuts. Even when doubts were at an all-time high, hope was exceedingly higher. It is our power in numbers that allows us to stand as we do today.

In an age where loneliness seems unavoidable, organizations such as T.E. demand young people, isolation's greatest victims, to work in tandem. There is no driving force behind our youth in Somerville stronger than Teen Empowerment.





Testimony from Alexander Moccaldi, Winter Hill

Hello,

My name is Alexander Moccaldi.

I was a Youth Organizer for Teen Empowerment from 2023-2025, and I am here to speak my mind about the potential cut funding of Teen Empowerment.

To those who are considering cutting the funds to Teen Empowerment, I highly suggest that you give that a second thought because, from my experience working with the people in Teen Empowerment, it would really be unwise to cut the funding of such a great organization.

The people who helped me, the people who supported me, and the skills I learned with the people in Teen Empowerment - it wouldn't be fair to cut the funding of an organization supporting the youth of both the past, present, and future.

This organization has taught me so much and helped me in ways nobody else possibly could. The fact that it is at risk of getting its funding cut means that other youth, present and future, won't be able to have the amount of support that I was able to get.

Teen Empowerment didn't just help me with work ethics and life skills, but also life outside of Teen Empowerment. That support really means a lot to me, especially after high school and how hard it is to find a job.

Teen Empowerment gave me so much support with finding jobs, and no other place other than Teen Empowerment would give me this same amount of support.

I believe that other youth, both now and in the future, should be given this opportunity and support from people like those in Teen Empowerment, but this support won't be possible without their funds.

I highly suggest that the people in power really take the time to look into the impact of Teen Empowerment and the amount of love, care, and support that Teen Empowerment gave not just me, but many other youth working in Teen Empowerment, and that this support would have positive benefits in Somerville through the work they do.

The Center for Teen Empowerment, Inc.





Testimony from Kira Tipton, Winter Hill

Hello,

My name is Kira Tipton. I am 18 years old, and I have been a Youth Organizer with The Center for Teen Empowerment since 2024. When talking about the impact of this program on my life, I can confidently say that I wouldn't be the person I am today, with the path I have for my future, without my experience with Teen Empowerment.

Throughout my time at Teen Empowerment, I have had the opportunity to truly feel like a part of a community. I have made connections and memories with fellow Youth Organizers and program staff that have shaped who I am today.

The opportunity to get work experience in community organizing has been instrumental in helping me picture my path forward after high school. My time at TE has taught me so much about my career, independence, and community organizing overall. Through these experiences, I have been able to meet enough people in different fields to be confident in my decision to pursue Sociology in the fall at UMB.

Teens deserve to know they're going home to enough food and to have fun no matter their family's financial situation. Because of Teen Empowerment, I have been able to afford groceries and basic necessities for myself, as well as have enough money to pay for experiences with friends that I couldn't imagine my teen years without.

Feeling connected to peers and having positive role models is one of the most influential factors in youth outcomes, and TE is a space where I can make real friends and see people who grew up like me succeeding as staff.

For decades, Teen Empowerment has been instrumental in the youth community of Somerville. From events to civic engagement to educational resources, the impact on our youth is clear.

I urge the Council to care for this organization as they have cared for so many of our city's youth for so many years.

Thank you all.

The Center for Teen Empowerment, Inc.





Testimony from Kaily Ochoa, Winter Hill

Hello,

My name is Kaily Ochoa. I am an upcoming sophomore at Somerville High School, and I was a Youth Associate at the Peace Conference of 2026.

TE is a really important place in Somerville where young adults can have their voices heard and where something can be done to help. TE is a place where that happens.

Having young people's voices heard is important because it helps adults know things from our perspective and understand what is actually helping us, as we are affected by their decisions.

Funding TE helps give a space where young adults can voice their concerns about things that are happening around them and give solutions on how we can improve our community together. Funding TE helps give young adults opportunities to gain support and encourages young adults to be heard.

Thank you for your time and for hearing me out.





TEEN EMPOWERMENT
— SOMERVILLE —

Testimony from Jaclyn Diaz Guillen, Mystic Housing Development

Hello,

My name is Jackie, and I am a former Youth Organizer from TE's 2025 Summer Cohort.

I'd like to start by giving you a brief and honest request: please maintain funding for TE, because it has become such a huge part of my life, and I can guarantee it is important to hundreds of Youth Organizers who have been a part of TE in the past, or will be in the future.

I'm here today thanks to TE. I think it's concerning that we weren't informed that our funding would be cut this drastically when TE has done so much throughout the years to help all different kinds of kids come together and recognize their differences.

Our differences have brought each of our teens closer, creating a stronger, united community. At TE, we nurture our differences and let them empower us as individuals. We create opportunities for disenfranchised youth to have a second chance that no one else is willing to give them.

I, at just 15 years old, have already seen so many of my peers grow and become amazing people in this community, all thanks to the work that TE has done.





TEEN EMPOWERMENT
— SOMERVILLE —

Testimony from Arhien Luz, Winter Hill

Hi,

I'm Arhien Luz.

I'm a junior at Somerville High and a former Youth Organizer at Teen Empowerment. I'd like to ask the Council to keep funding Teen Empowerment.

Teen Empowerment can be, and is, such an important resource for me and many other youth. This program brought me from being a quiet kid, insecure about his speech impediment, to someone who can speak up and talk about this.

And I know for sure that I'm not the only one that Teen Empowerment has impacted. I know many people who enter this program with little hope for the future and leave happy and excited for what is to come. I know people who struggle and have nowhere else to come to get help and share what they have gone through. TE is that place.

So if you think that cutting TE loose is the best choice of action, I beg thee to reconsider.

Thank you.





TEEN EMPOWERMENT
— SOMERVILLE —

Testimony from Havilah Nimako, Mystic Housing Development

Hi,

My name is Havilah, and I am currently a junior at Somerville High School. I have been a Youth Organizer for Teen Empowerment since the Spring of 2023.

From the start, Teen Empowerment has been my safe place. When I first joined, I immediately felt safe and comfortable being myself and sharing my ideas and opinions.

Teen Empowerment taught me the importance of a strong work ethic, how to give and receive feedback, how to communicate with my peers and political leaders, and how to manage my finances responsibly.

For example, I've learned new skills in workshops, I've asked questions to Mayor Jake Wilson at the youth mayoral forum when he and Councilman Willie Burnley were final candidates, and I helped plan and create the last two Youth Peace Conferences.

All of these experiences are important to me and couldn't have happened without Teen Empowerment. I hope you will consider maintaining funding for Teen Empowerment so future generations can have the same opportunities that I have had.

Thank you.





TEEN EMPOWERMENT
— SOMERVILLE —

Testimony from Tyjon Jones, Winter Hill

Hello,

My name is Tyjon. I'm a junior at Somerville High, and I'm asking the City Council to continue funding Teen Empowerment.

When people talk about budget cuts to youth jobs, I think sometimes they forget that young people have real responsibilities too.

A lot of youth help support their families, pay for food, transportation, or other basic needs. Some of us are trying to save for college, help with bills, or simply gain the experience we need to build a future for ourselves. Youth jobs are not just fun opportunities. For many of us, they are important.

Young people are often told that we are the future, but it's hard to believe that when programs and opportunities for youth are the first things being reduced. If we want young people to grow into responsible, successful adults, we need to invest in them now.

I ask that you see youth employment and programs not as an expense, but as an investment in the future of this city.





TEEN EMPOWERMENT
— SOMERVILLE —

Testimony from Julianna Harrison, West Somerville

Hi,

My name is Julianna Harrison.

What would the city be like without Teen Empowerment?

My life without TE would create a separation between navigating the world and my identity.

Throughout my journey working with Teen Empowerment, I became empowered by developing stronger connections, self-esteem, and confidence in my own abilities and ideas. They shaped my identity so I understand who I am as a growing teenager.

At the Peace Conference, I shared a speech about grieving the loss of my mom, something I wasn't able to do five years ago. Teen Empowerment uplifted me to use my voice even in my worst moments.

So tell me, do you really want to cut funds from an organization that teaches teenagers about equity and justice? I beg you, please let's make a change.

Thank you.





TEEN EMPOWERMENT
— SOMERVILLE —

Testimony from Gianna Gallant, Winter Hill

Hello,

My name is Gianna Gallant, and I have worked with Teen Empowerment throughout the Summer of 2025 and the 2025-2026 school year.

Teen Empowerment has impacted my life by:

- Helping me become more social
- Helping me make new connections and friends
- Helping me become more confident in myself and who I am
- Helping me with my mental health and overall well-being
- Giving me a space to express my mental health in a way that helps me cope and helps others understand
- Helping me when I was in danger

This is why Teen Empowerment should be funded and stay open to youth for generations to come. It gives youth and the community hope for the future and gives them opportunities they would not have otherwise.

We need youth jobs, because at the end of the day we are the future. We will be the ones who guide the future and bring hope to future generations.

The [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]