

Dorcas Ngaliema

Boys and Girls Club of Southern Maine Alumna

February 20th

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to address you today.

I am Dorcas Ngaliema, a proud alumna of the Boys and Girls Club, and I stand before you in support of the crucial bill, LD2197. This legislation seeks to provide one-time funding to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Maine, an organization that has played a pivotal role in shaping lives, including mine. Today, I wish to share my personal journey to underscore the profound impact that the Boys and Girls Club has had on me.

In 2014, I arrived in the State of Maine at the age of 17, seeking asylum. After three challenging months in a motel, my family and I were relocated to the Portland Family Shelter, situated right across from the Boys and Girls Club in Portland. Despite the restrictive rules within the shelter, one silver lining emerged – the assurance that children could attend the Boys and Girls Club, conveniently located adjacent to Portland High School.

Throughout my first year in the U.S., the Boys and Girls Club became my second home. It provided a sanctuary where I completed my homework, honed my skills as a pool player, developed leadership abilities, and learned the significance of community service. It's where I discovered my passion for playing the acoustic and electric guitar, fulfilled my dream of being in a band, and forged enduring friendships over the past decade.

The Boys and Girls Club was the backdrop for transformative experiences, from embarking on a 21-day backpacking trip along the Appalachian Trails and White Mountains to meeting mentors who guided me through assimilating into the United States. This remarkable organization connected me with a beautiful family that made it possible for me to pursue a college education, fulfilling my parents' dreams.

As I stand before you today, I represent not only myself but also the thousands of children who, like me, have found a second home in the Boys and Girls Club. We are forever grateful for the unwavering support this organization has provided throughout our lives. My journey, transitioning from an asylee to a permanent resident, is but one snapshot of the countless success stories that echo within the walls of the Boys and Girls Club.

I implore you to recognize the profound impact that the Boys and Girls Club has on shaping the future of generations in the State of Maine. With my story, I hope to convey the far-reaching effects of this organization and encourage your favorable vote on LD2197. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story and advocate for this crucial cause today.

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LD 2197

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