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Testimony in Support of *LD 2197, An Act to Strengthen the Health, Well-being and Academic Success of Children and their Families through increased Community Support of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Maine*

February 20, 2024

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and my esteemed colleagues of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am a cosponsor of this bill to support the Boys and Girls Clubs, and would like to briefly add to the other remarks already made. Speaker Talbot Ross mentioned Surgeon General Murthy's warning about lack of social connections.

This is based on a growing body of research around the world. In June 2010, for instance, top New England leaders in medicine and public health (including a Nobel Laureate and a National Medal of Science recipient) issued a consensus statement in which they pointed out the health importance of communal spaces. One bedrock finding from the body of research: "Social isolation is associated with increased risk of death and illness; this relationship is separate from any effects of socioeconomic status, self-reported baseline health status, substance abuse, and utilization of preventive health services."^{1, 2}

Social isolation is a threat to health. Institutions like the Boys and Girls Clubs are an important way to address the upstream social determinants of health.

Thank you.

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/425958/>

² <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19164723/>