



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Testimony of Matthew Houghton before
the Committee on Health and Human Services
in support of

**LD 1389: An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through
Out-of-School Time Program**

April 8, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Matthew Houghton and I'm the Chief Program Officer of Child Development at the Bangor Region YMCA. I support LD 1389: *An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-School Time Program*.

The 15 YMCAs in Maine are collectively the largest childcare provider in the state. We served 24,000 school-age children last year through before/after school care, summer camp, and youth sports. These safe, nurturing, and enriching programs are essential for working parents and our economy. Research shows these programs boost student engagement, improve attendance, reduce risky behaviors, and promote social-emotional growth. With access to homework help, healthy meals, and trusted mentors, kids thrive both in and out of the classroom.

The demand for YMCA vacation and summer camps, as well as youth enrichment programs, is consistently high in Bangor and the surrounding communities because these programs provide opportunities for children to grow, learn, and thrive outside during school breaks and summer months. The focus of Camp Acorn, Camp Pierce Weber and Adventure Camp is outdoor activities and games. This includes daily swim, archery, ropes course, sports program, STEAM activities and adventure-based hiking at various locations across central Maine. Camps provide a smartphone/device free facility to promote engagement with the outdoors, physical activity and social interaction.

This year we have a waitlist at Camp Acorn, which has 26 slots per week for ages 5 years to 2nd grade. To date, the waitlist is 10 students each week. Camp Pierce Webber has 211 slots per week (for students in pre-k- 6th grade), and Adventure Camp 39 slots per week (for students 5th-10th grade). The average waitlist each week for these camps is in the range of 50 children. The demand for childcare increases during the summer months for children in Pre-K to grade 6. There is a lack of childcare options and families are forced to pay more for childcare at day camps, so these families need additional financial assistance. If we had additional funds through this grant, we would be able to offer breakfast, snacks and lunch for children at our camps during the summer months, as food insecurity is high with our families. Vacation care 2024-2025 school year serves roughly 60 youth per session, or 180 per year. By providing childcare when schools are closed for vacations, parents can work without disruption. When schools have in-service days/inclement weather days we provide needed childcare for parents to work. Thus far this year, from September to April of the 2024-2025 school year, the Bangor YMCA has provided childcare for 114 individuals.

Our camps build healthy kids through a focus on developing social/emotional skills and confidence. Children at our Bangor YMCA camps build friendships and positive relationships with caring adults that often last a lifetime. Students are also developing school readiness skills through hands on learning opportunities outdoors and experimentation. These camp activities foster confidence and prepare our Y-kids for success in the school classrooms each fall.

Respectfully submitted,

Contact: Matthew Houghton, Bangor Region YMCA
P: 207-941-2808 **E:** mhoughton@bangory.org