



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
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Testimony of Emily Goldthwaite 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 4th, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Emily Goldthwaite and I'm the Curriculum and Behavior Specialist 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.

YMCA school-age youth programs are consistently at capacity, with long waitlists across many sites. While we work hard to stretch resources and fundraise to keep programs affordable and accessible, our ability to expand is limited by challenges like staffing, space, and transportation. In addition, we're seeing a significant rise in behavioral challenges among the children we serve, and we need more resources to support them effectively.

The BOOST bill is an exciting step toward expanding access to school-age childcare for Maine families, especially those that are at-risk or underserved. This grant program would help community-based organizations, including the YMCA, create new programs, grow existing ones, and overcome barriers that prevent families from accessing quality care.

- Currently, the Bangor Region YMCA Before and After School program is operating three locations, Onsite at the Bangor YMCA which provides Before care for 48 youth and After School Care for 72 youth (Pre-k-6<sup>th</sup> grade), Offsite at the Fruit Street School in Bangor which provides after school care for 39 youth (K-3<sup>rd</sup>), and Offsite at the Veazie Community School in Veazie which provides care for 16 youth (Pre-k-6<sup>th</sup> grade). 140 individual youth are served through these three locations in total.
- Many parents have work schedules that extend beyond traditional school or childcare hours. Bangor Region YMCA offers before care from 6:30 am to 9:00 am and Aftercare from 2:30 to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Our before and aftercare programs bridge the gaps for many of our working families. Without before or after school care a number of families would have to alter or reduce their working hours or would be unable to work. This care strengthens our community, and our economy in Maine by providing safe, enriching care that families can rely and depend on. Before and aftercare provide a safe, reliable, educational environment for their children, giving parents peace of mind while they focus on their work commitments.
- Our care at the Bangor YMCA extends to school vacations, inclement weather and in-service days. By providing care for families during inclement weather we ensure that local families can meet their work commitments.
- A major barrier to us providing more programming is transportation. Currently, we have three Y vans we use to transport children from both out and in the district to the YMCA. The school bus company does not have the capacity to bus from all schools to our Y. Due to these limitations there are several schools we are unable to transport leaving those families to either look for additional care or arrange alternatives for their children.

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- Our next barrier is a lack of space to provide programming. Many local schools do not have the space to provide a consistent classroom or area for our program, something we need to run an enriching and consistent program.
- Youth with high behavioral or specialized needs present an individual challenge. The Bangor Region YMCA seeks to include all youth in our program, and we do this by creating support plans for children who need individualized support and by working with families to connect them with BHP services. However, if there was an increase in funding for after school programs it would be more feasible to be able to hire staff to work with those who needed more support. This in turn would allow the program to be more accessible, expose youth to others from diverse backgrounds with differing needs, and allow the parents of youth with specialized needs to be able to work. Additional funding would support the staffing needs for those with specialized needs and support the addition of adaptive equipment and environmental support that those youth need. Before and aftercare provide convenience and flexibility by offering extended care options helps parents manage their busy schedules, whether it's getting to work early, staying late, or simply having additional time for errands and other family responsibilities.

At the Bangor YMCA we currently utilize evidence-based curriculum to support the physical, social/emotional, cognitive, language/literacy, and mathematics skills of our Youth. Specifically. Before and aftercare programs often include arts and crafts, outdoor play, and group games, which allow children to learn, explore, and have fun in a structured and supportive setting. We use three curriculums: Creative Curriculum Gold, Project Learning Tree, and the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) with its accompanying Lesson plans. These three curricula allow us to focus on the whole child's individual's development. In addition to the curriculum youth are evaluated three times during the school year using the DESSA evaluation. This data is shared with families and incorporated in the selection of targeted Social Emotional lesson plans. Families are invited to meet with the Lead teacher of their child to discuss this data and the plan for developing their skills in the social-emotional domain. At the Bangor YMCA we believe in the collaboration between the family, youth, and teachers to support and develop both the individual and the program as a whole. These programs help children build social and emotional skills, confidence, and creativity outside of regular school hours. Before and aftercare programs often include arts and crafts, outdoor play, and group games, which allow children to learn, explore, and have fun in a structured and supportive setting and gives children the chance to build friendships and engage with peers and staff in a positive and inclusive environment.

Respectfully submitted,

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