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Testimony of Alicia Grindle 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 04, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Alicia Grindle and I'm the Director of School Age Services at the Down East Family YMCA, in Ellsworth. 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/afterschool 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.

- Before and After School programs are vitally important for families to work full time jobs. Summer and Vacation Camp care allows families the ability to continue to work, while giving their children an activity enriched atmosphere to work on life skills, social/emotional growth, building confidence, and increasing their independent abilities in a safe and fun environment.
- Yes, we have a waitlist- in some years we have more names on it vs others but typically we can see 3-10 names on it at a time. Our school-aged program's biggest barrier is STAFFING. When talking with families, their biggest barrier is financial costs (especially those that receive assistance).
- Having more funding could help us revamp our current space to better suit/serve the children and families that enroll in our programs. More funding could also allow the children in After School, Vacation Camp, and Summer Camp to have a better variety of snacks that would keep them full to tide them over until they got home to eat dinner. School-Aged children consistently come to After School starving because they ate so early at school or didn't eat lunch because they didn't like it- so only having crackers, pretzels, and non-filling snacks makes children act out & show behaviors because they are just hungry.
- Parent Testimony #1: "Parents like myself depend on the YMCA After School and Summer Camp programs to allow our family to work full time jobs. My girls love going to these programs because they participate in fun activities all day and get to socialize with their friends".
- Parent Testimony #2: "My daughter has made so many friends throughout the years and has learned so much! The field trips she has been able to partake in and all the fun activities in between have been some of the best memories my daughter has made. The Director of the program and the staff she hires are so supportive, caring, loving, and truly there for the kids and families they serve".

Respectfully submitted,  
Alicia Grindle

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