



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Written Testimony of Meaghan Woodsome 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 08, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Meaghan Woodsome and I'm the Chief Administrative Officer of the YMCA of Southern Maine. 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.

The YMCA of Southern Maine currently runs two summer day camps in Freeport and Biddeford, and we are reopening our Standish-based camp next summer. We consistently see wait lists for all 10 weeks of camp – there are simply not enough spots to meet the needs of families in our community.

Access to affordable care is a critical issue facing Maine families today. At the YMCA of Southern Maine, one out of every two children in our care receives financial assistance – these families simply could not afford to participate without this support. This need has become even more pressing now that there are waitlists for state childcare subsidies, leaving many working families with nowhere to turn.

We are also witnessing firsthand the increased social-emotional needs of both students and their caregivers. Children are coming to our programs with complex challenges that require additional support, training, and resources. Our staff work diligently to create environments where children feel safe, understood, and empowered to develop healthy coping skills. Additionally, we address food insecurity by providing two healthy snacks each day of camp, ensuring children have the nutrition they need to learn, play, and grow.

Perhaps most importantly, the YMCA supports the development of caring adult mentors who form meaningful relationships with the children we serve. These relationships are the foundation for building resilience in young people. Our trained staff don't just supervise children – they connect with them, guide them, and help them discover their own strengths and abilities. These connections are especially crucial for children experiencing adversity or trauma, providing stability and positive role models during critical developmental years.

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The BOOST program would allow us to expand our impact, hire and train more qualified staff, provide additional financial assistance to families in need, enhance our programming to address emerging social-emotional challenges, and ultimately serve more Maine children and families who desperately need these services.

Respectfully submitted,

Meaghan Woodsome

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