



Testimony of: Jennifer Roe

In support of: LD 1389 - BOOST Bill: Building Opportunities through Out of School Time

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Jennifer Roe, and I am the Executive Director of *A Company of Girls+* (ACOG+), a Portland-based nonprofit that has been empowering youth through the arts for nearly 30 years through free, high-quality, out-of-school time (OST) and outreach programming. I'm writing today to express strong support for **LD 1389 - BOOST Bill: Building Opportunities through Out of School Time**.

This legislation is a crucial step toward ensuring that Maine's young people—regardless of income, geography, or background—have access to the kinds of safe, enriching, and consistent learning environments they need to thrive beyond the classroom. It recognizes what we have long known: out-of-school time is not just a gap to be filled, but a *vital opportunity* to build the confidence, connection, and capacity our youth need to succeed. It is in these hours—after school, on weekends, and during the summer—that young people explore their identities, build leadership skills, and envision their futures.

At ACOG+, we witness every day the powerful impact of consistent, creative, and community-centered OST programming. Our participants—who come from a wide range of backgrounds, with a focus on those who are under-resourced or marginalized—develop essential life skills, strengthen their resilience, and experience a profound sense of belonging and self-worth.

As one of our participants recently shared, *“ACOG+ isn't just an afterschool program—it's the first place I felt like I could truly be myself.”*

Across Maine and the nation, OST programs play a vital role in youth development. Whether through the arts, STEM, sports, mentoring, or leadership opportunities, these programs help young people build confidence, foster social-emotional growth, and stay connected to their communities. Mentoring, in particular, creates trusted relationships that offer support, guidance, and inspiration—especially for youth who may not otherwise have access to consistent adult role models. These programs are not just “nice to have”—they are essential supports for working families, protective factors for mental health, and powerful tools for equity.

Yet too many families who want and need these programs simply cannot access them. Gaps in funding, transportation, staffing, and availability leave countless children on the sidelines. This bill recognizes that challenge—and offers real solutions by investing in the infrastructure and sustainability of OST programs across the state.

At A Company of Girls+, we've seen firsthand how life-changing these programs can be. But we are just one example in a vibrant and diverse field of OST providers doing extraordinary work. What we need now is the public investment to match the public good we provide.

On behalf of A Company of Girls+, I urge you to vote **Ought to Pass on LD 1389** and invest in the future of Maine's youth. They deserve it—and our communities will be stronger for it.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the well-being of all children and families in our state.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Roe

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