

LEWISTON ME

Lewiston Recreation Department

Lewiston Armory, 65 Central Avenue, Lewiston, Maine 04240

Testimony of Nicole Welch 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 Nicole Welch and I'm the Recreation Director for the City of Lewiston. I support LD 1389: *An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-School Time Program*.


I have seen first-hand the impact that the Boys and Girls Club has had in Lewiston. Boys & Girls Clubs fill the gap between school and home. We provide welcoming, positive environments in which kids and teens have fun, participate in life-changing programs and experiences, and build supportive relationships with peers and caring adults. Boys & Girls Clubs in Maine collectively serve over 8,000 school-age youth at 18 Club sites across the state.

Research shows that afterschool and summer programs, like Boys & Girls Clubs, 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. However, according to the National Afterschool Alliance, in Maine, for every one child enrolled in an afterschool program, there are five waiting to get in. Parents also recognize the benefits of afterschool and summer programs with 83% of Maine parents agreeing that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs.

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

All youth deserve a safe, fun, and educational environment where they can thrive. This bill will support so many youth, even beyond the Boys and Girls Club, that are in need of these essential social opportunities. At Lewiston Recreation Department, we can tell which applicants have grown up through a Boys and Girls Club program because of their excellent interview skills. Youth programs develop lifelong skills and habits that will be carried with them into the future.

Respectfully Submitted,



Nicole Welch

Recreation Director, City of Lewiston