



Testimony of Mackenzie Rodrigue 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 Mackenzie Rodrigue and I'm the Teen Coordinator at the Boys & Girls Club of Southern Maine Lewiston Teen Center. I support LD 1389: *An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-School Time Program*.

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.

At the Boys & Girls Club of Southern Maine's Lewiston Teen Center, we offer a variety of after-school programs to support the development of local teens. We have a weekly cooking club, where teens learn culinary skills and safety to create new recipes. Our career exploration activities introduce teens to new professions through virtual reality, guest speakers, and field experiences. We also provide a space for teens that promotes physical activity through basketball, soccer, and other sports, which helps to foster teamwork and discipline. Additionally, we take teens on field trips so they can explore local museums, outdoor events, and more to help connect them with their surroundings. Aside from supporting our teens and their academics, we also have programs that focus on mental health. We offer activities that promote emotional well-being such as group discussions, how to practice mindfulness, healthy coping skills, and more to help teens practice self-care and build resilience. These programs help teens develop important life skills and prepare them for future academic success and career readiness. By participating in our programs, teens gain confidence to pursue their goals and develop a sense of purpose. Increased resources would allow us to expand our programming, hire additional staff, and provide more opportunities for youth in the Lewiston/Auburn area, helping us meet the needs of the community.

Respectfully submitted,
Mackenzie Rodrigue

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