



April 8, 2025

Testimony of Matt Dubel on behalf of Portland ConnectED before the Health & Human Services Committee, 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 Matt Dubel and I am the director of a partnership of organizations in greater Portland called Portland ConnectED. Our partners work together across sectors—nonprofit, K-12, business, philanthropy, health—to improve outcomes for children and families in our community.

I'm here today to testify in strong support of LD 1389 on behalf of our Out of School Time Learning Network, a coalition of over 40 community-based organizations who work in collaboration with schools to expand access to out of school time learning opportunities. Our partners work every day to build the community's capacity to deliver after school and summer learning opportunities that complement the school day and prepare all students for postsecondary education, workforce, and civic life, with a particular focus on children who have often been left out of traditional youth development programming.

Evidence indicates that out-of-school-time learning opportunities can have a significant impact on youth academic success, achievement, and aspirations. A U.S. Department of Education study found that the majority of Maine students enrolled in a high-quality afterschool program in 4th-8th grade improved their performance on both state reading and math assessments. Moreover, programs expose young people to career paths, support kids to build life skills, and provide youth with physical activity. In fact, out-of-school learning is such an effective strategy that the Afterschool Alliance estimates that every \$1 dollar invested yields \$3 dollars in savings to the community, by increasing children's future earning potential and reducing crime.

And the benefits extend well beyond one generation. After school and summer programs provide a safe and supportive place for kids to be during non-school hours, giving parents the ability to work knowing their kids are well cared for. It's both a short-term and long-term workforce strategy, enabling parents to work now, while building the capacity of our future workforce.

Unfortunately, our community, like most communities in Maine, does not have enough capacity to serve all young people who need or want care after school and in the summer. According to the Maine Afterschool Network, for every child in Maine enrolled in a youth program, 5 more would have liked to enroll if a space had been available to them. And the capacity that does exist is less accessible to marginalized families. Many students face barriers such as poverty, lack of transportation, housing instability, or special education needs that prevent them from enrolling.

The good news is that LD 1389 would enable communities all over Maine to address these challenges by providing critical investment directly to the local organizations who stand ready to take down barriers and expand capacity to serve more young people. The infrastructure exists—community-based organizations doing high quality programming, effective partnerships that enable dollars to stretch further—and the support that the BOOST Bill would provide is poised to expand opportunity for students across Maine.