



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Testimony of Katherine Harvey 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 Katherine Harvey and I'm the Director of Philanthropy & Government Relations at the Boys & Girls Clubs & YMCA of Greater Waterville at the Alfond Youth & Community Center. 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 Boys & Girls Clubs and YMCA of Greater Waterville at the Alfond Youth & Community Center (AYCC) play a crucial role in supporting Maine families by providing essential before and after-school care, vacation and summer camps, and youth enrichment programs. These services are vital for working parents and guardians, offering a safe and nurturing environment where children can continue their educational journey beyond school hours.

The demand for such programs is significant, reflecting the community's need for quality childcare solutions. To ensure accessibility, AYCC offers financial assistance through its Affordable Access Program, allowing families from various economic backgrounds to benefit from these services.

Increased financial resources would further enhance AYCC's ability to address community needs effectively. Additional funding could support financial assistance for more families, improve transportation options, provide meals and snacks, and expand mental health support. These enhancements would not only increase program accessibility but also enrich the quality of care and development opportunities available to children.

AYCC's school-age enrichment programs are designed to foster healthy lifestyles and set children up for academic and career success. Through a diverse range of activities including arts, technology, gardening, swimming, and field trips children develop social and emotional skills, stay physically active, and engage in continuous learning. Such comprehensive programming ensures that Maine's youth are well-equipped for future challenges and opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,
Katherine Harvey

Contact: Katherine Harvey
P: 207-872-8842 **E:** kharvey@clubaycc.org