



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Amy D. Kuhn

20 Old Powerhouse Road

Falmouth, ME 04105

(207) 939-6903

Amy.Kuhn@legislature.maine.gov

February 20, 2024

Testimony of Rep. Amy D. Kuhn in support of

**LD 2197, An Act to Strengthen the Health, Well-being and Academic Success
of Children and their Families through Increased Community Support of the
Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Maine**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Amy Kuhn and I proudly represent the residents of House District 111 in the Town of Falmouth.

I am pleased to join you today to express my strong support for LD 2197, which proposes a one-time \$2,000,000 appropriation to construct a new Bridge to Success Center dedicated to providing spaces for junior high and high school age youth to intensify their studies, develop their passions, and build essential skills.

Across the country and across our state, Boys & Girls Clubs play a vital role in supporting the development of young people and strengthening communities. These organizations provide safe, positive, and enriching environments where boys and girls of all backgrounds can experience opportunities that contribute to their overall well-being and future success.

The Bridge to Success Center proposed here will build on existing, successful programming to expand opportunities for hundreds of additional young people in the Greater Portland communities, offering a nurturing environment for academic growth, skill development, and the exploration of individual interests. There are a few reasons why I believe this investment is so important:

- **Enhanced Learning Opportunities:** The Center's expanded programming space will provide enhanced opportunities for traditional and hands on experiences, which will facilitate curiosity and authentic learning, enabling them to excel academically and prepare them for future challenges.
- **Interest Development:** The Center's Career Exploration Labs will foster exploration, creativity and innovation, empowering students to develop their passions, contributing to personal fulfillment and nurturing a generation of engaged individuals.

- **Skill Building:** The proposed Center will offer programs and resources designed to build specific, needed skills like culinary arts and VR coding, as well as more broadly applicable skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication. These skills are invaluable for success in any academic or professional pursuit.
- **Community Impact:** By investing in Boys and Girls Clubs, we contribute to the development of well-rounded, resilient individuals who will go on to positively impact our state, in part by adding to Maine's workforce. The dividends of this investment would extend far beyond individual success, creating stronger, healthier, and more vibrant communities for generations to come.

For all of these reasons, I urge the Committee to vote *Ought to Pass* on LD 2197. Thank you for your consideration.