



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Testimony of Penobscot Bay YMCA CEO Whitney Files 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 Whitney Files and I'm the CEO at the Penobscot Bay YMCA in Rockland and Rockport. I support LD 1389: *An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-School Time Program*.

Our Y is the largest provider of child care in Knox County, offering quality, licensed after school programs and day camps. Our mission is to ensure programs are accessible and affordable to everyone, especially children from working families. At a time when research shows the harm excessive screen time and social media can have on young minds, our out-of-school time programs fill a desperate need—giving kids time to run, explore, create, and connect in real life.

We proudly partner with local school districts to operate four after school programs on-site in elementary schools in Thomaston, Rockland, Owls Head, and Rockport, serving over 170 children in 2024. Our safe, affordable programs allow Midcoast parents to work full days—at PenBay hospital, in retail, hospitality, or manufacturing—knowing their children are with caring adults in a fun, enriching environment. I speak from personal experience as a working mom: before the Y's program opened in our school, I scrambled to find teenage babysitters to meet my second grader off the bus. It was inconsistent and expensive—\$250 per week for babysitting, compared to just \$85 per week for the Y's program.

Our affordable summer day camps are just as essential. Thanks to local partners that provide free space, we offer four summer camps in Thomaston, Hope, Lincolnville, and Rockport, serving nearly 300 children in grades K–8. Our camps run full-day, Monday through Friday, with Before and After Care options to serve working parents, and cost an average of only \$215/week for members (compared to \$325+/week for other local camps).

While state subsidies for after school and summer care exist, many families are being placed on waitlists or they earn just a bit too much to qualify. In Knox County, 30% of households are ALICE families* (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) – they earn too much to qualify for benefits, yet still struggle with cost of living. Our Y fundraises to keep programs affordable for these families, but barriers like staffing, space, and transportation make it difficult to sustain our existing work. For example, hiring skilled staff for just a few hours after school each day is a challenge, so we have had to raise wages—teachers are a natural fit, but their contracts often prevent them from working right after school ends. And while we accessed past ARPA funding for enrichment—such as teaching artists or science programs—that funding is gone, and now those costs must be covered by parent fees.

The BOOST bill is a critical step forward. It would help us keep care affordable and provide access to the enriching, essential experiences all kids deserve. Thank you for supporting this bill.

Respectfully submitted,
Whitney Files

*Source: <https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/maine>

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