



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

April 8, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Diane Dickerson and I'm the proud CEO of the Bangor Region YMCA. I strongly support LD 1389: An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-School Time Program. My colleagues and staff have provided you with facts and figures related to the critical importance of Out-Of-School Time, but I want to bring it to the more day to day real impact on our families. I could provide to you story after story of how our Before and After School Programs and our summer camp programs support our families, our local workforce and our regional economy. In fact, we are in the midst of a Capital Campaign to build a new regional YMCA and a critical part of this new campus will be to **double the size** of our Early Childhood Education and our Out-Of-School Time programs due to the need in our region. Our research has shown that the limited out-of-school time resources available to our parents is a major cause of declining workforce and lower economic growth in our region. Our new Y will help to change that and it is one of the primary reasons we have raised to date \$37 million to build our new \$57.8 million dollar Y.

Allow me to share with you the words of one of our parents who takes full advantage of our Y's Out-Of-School Time Programming. Names have been changed and diagnosis omitted to protect the privacy of this family.

"Attending the YMCA summer camps have benefitted my children in numerous ways; camp offers a structured and safe space for my children to thrive. This allows me peace of mind knowing that they are safe and having fun. This is my son Bill's 6th year attending camp through the YMCA. He continues to grow and thrive every year. This will be my son Jamie's second summer at Camp Acorn and I was impressed with Jill and her staff. He was treated with respect and patience and Jill would always keep me updated and ask questions in order to help him thrive. I especially appreciate that Jamie can still attend summer camp because I was unsure if he'd be able to go anywhere because of his diagnosis. I love watching him make healthy attachments with counselors and other peers. This will also be my daughter Ashley's second year at CPW and she had so much fun and made some lasting friendships. Ashley has gained independence during her time at camp and she has grown and matured so much during the summer. All 3 of my children have gained a sense of independence and developed a sense of belonging because of their time at the Bangor Y's camps. Without the financial help provided to me by the Y, it wouldn't be possible to send my kids and I wouldn't be able to continue working to support my family. Thank you to everyone at the Y for this opportunity"

The benefit of these children being in program extends beyond this family. The teachers learned more about diversifying instruction, altering their language to address communication barriers, and about the success a child can have with the right supports. It is a win-win for all. Our Y prides itself on community fund-raising efforts to provide more than 50% of our children in our programs to receive financial assistance. This is needed to ensure our services are available and welcoming to all.

LD 1389 would create a grant program to support community-based organizations to expand or enhance school-age youth development programs for children ages 5 to 13, with an emphasis on children that are

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at-risk or underserved. YMCAs could utilize this funding to create satellite programs in additional school districts; address access barriers such as transportation or program fees; add specialized staff to better support children's mental and behavioral health needs; or enhance STEAM programming. There is so much opportunity to support our families, children and our community, but we need your help. Please invest in our children, families and workforce. Please know the power you have to improve the life-long path for our most at-risk children and the ability for parents to be in the workforce. I urge you to support this important legislation and ensure that all children—regardless of income or geography—have access to the care and enrichment they need to thrive.

Respectfully Submitted,

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