



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

Testimony of Meg Helming 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 8, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Meg Helming and I'm the Chief Operating Officer at the YMCA Alliance of Northern New England, which supports and represents the 15 YMCAs in Maine. We strongly 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, serving children ages six weeks through adolescence. Last year, we served 1,500 infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and 24,000 school-age children through before/after school care, summer camp, and youth sports. These safe, nurturing, and enriching programs are essential for working parents and our economy.

Just as working parents rely on full-day childcare for their smallest children, they also need dependable care for their elementary and middle school children during the hours between the end of the school day and the end of the workday. Parents count on safe, reliable programs that allow them to work with peace of mind. At the same time, children benefit greatly from enriching, structured activities led by caring adult mentors. In our programs, kids stay active, enjoy nutritious meals and snacks, receive homework support, explore new interests, build friendships, and thrive in a safe, nurturing environment families can trust. Research shows that these programs improve academic performance and school attendance; reduce problem behaviors such as aggression and drug use; improve social emotional skills; and reduce engagement with the juvenile justice system.

According to the National Afterschool Alliance, for every one child in Maine enrolled in an afterschool program, five more are waiting for a spot. This is approximately 63,700 kids. This gap leaves many working families struggling to find safe, reliable care during the hours before and after school, during school vacations, and over the summer. 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.

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 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. These are just a few of our ideas!

By investing in school-age youth programs, we are investing in Maine's children, families, and 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.

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LD 1389

BOOST

**BUILDING OPPORTUNITY
THROUGH OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME**

THE NEED IN MAINE

70%

of children have both
parents working
outside the home

83%

of those children do
not have access to
out-of-school time
programs

A SMART INVESTMENT FOR OUR KIDS AND SOCIETY

\$1 → \$10

For every dollar invested
now, there is a \$10 return
in future economic
benefits

BENEFITS OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMMING

- ✓ Academic
- ✓ After-school
- ✓ Workforce
- ✓ Physical
- ✓ Preventive
- ✓ Behavioral

**\$5 MILLION FOR MAINE KIDS
COULD...**

- ✓ Provide scholarships for 1,000 kids
to access year-round programming
- ✓ Enhance STEM education
- ✓ Support children's mental &
behavioral health needs

LD 1389: AN ACT TO CREATE THE BUILDING OPPORTUNITY THROUGH OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAM

This bill would create a grant program for community-based organizations to increase access to out-of-school time programming for children ages 5-13, with a focus on at-risk and underserved children. Grants could support:

1. Creation of new programming;
2. Expansion or enhancement of existing programming; or
3. Reduction of barriers to access programming.

What is an out-of-school time (OOST) program? OOST programming is structured activities for school-age children during the hours that school is not in session and parents may be working. Specific programs may look like: before/after school care; vacation or summer day camp; and youth sports and/or enrichment clubs or activities.

BOOST SUPPORTERS INCLUDE:



QUESTIONS?

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DATA SOURCES

Annie E. Casey Foundation [ME Kids Count Data Book 2024](#)
[ME Department of Education Data Warehouse](#)
[National Afterschool Alliance](#)
[Boys & Girls Club of America](#)