

Testimony In Support of LD 948
"An Act To Support Boys and Girls Clubs through Lottery Revenue"

Good morning Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

I am writing in support of LD 948, an act to support Boys & Girls Clubs through lottery revenue. More than 21,000 youth attend seventeen Boys & Girls Clubs located in cities and towns across Maine including Southern Maine (Portland Metro), Kennebec Valley (Gardiner), Waterville, Bangor and on Native lands through the Boys & Girls Clubs of Border Towns (Presque Isle, Maliseet, and Sipayik). Many of the youth we serve come from disadvantaged communities, with 46% of our members living in single-parent households and over 65% qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch.

Boys & Girls Clubs provide a safe place afterschool and in the summer for youth 6-18 to build skills for the future through evidence informed practices, they continue to learn through group based programs and develop the social-emotional skills to ensure they can persevere through any challenge.

Over the past year, Clubs have responded to issues within their communities brought on by COVID-19, such as offering over 840 hours of virtual programming serving 775 youth, centers providing over 190,000 meals and snacks, and operating at least 8 hybrid learning sites being run by Boys & Girls Clubs serving nearly 500 youth during the school day. However, Clubs could do so much more to ensure that youth have a safe place to do afterschool and in the summer. More than 38,000 youth are alone and unsupervised between the hours of 3 and 6 pm. Clubs give young people a safe place to go during out-of-school hours and parents peace of mind.

Boys & Girls Clubs fill the gap between school and home. Clubs provide welcoming, positive environments in which kids and teens have fun, participate in life-changing programs and experiences, and build supportive relationships with peers and caring adults.

With your support for passing LD948, Clubs would be able to expand programs to serve more youth and offer additional programs that engage youth and keep them on track to graduate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mary Nelson
Board President
Maine Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs