

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
LIGHTHOUSE PROGRAMS**

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- Extended Day
- Youth Employment



Date: 3/12/07
Public Hearing Testimony
Speaker: Tammy Papa
Bill Number: 7348

Testimony of
Tammy Papa, Director
City of Bridgeport ~ Lighthouse Program

to the

Education Committee

March 12, 2007

RE: After School Bill #7348

Good afternoon. My name is Tammy Papa and I am the Director of the City of Bridgeport Lighthouse After School and Summer Program. On behalf of our partner agencies and the children and families that we serve, I would like to thank Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today with respect to proposed bill #7348.

Recently, the Bridgeport community submitted a comprehensive plan for after school to the National League of Cities under its *City Leaders Engaged In After School (CLEAR)* initiative. We sought their support and assistance in building the infrastructure to support quality after school programs located within the City. We continue to build upon this plan by partnering with the United Way of Eastern Fairfield County and convening a larger body of stakeholders. It is the City's hope that through this effort, Bridgeport's after school community will have a working document that will guide their daily operations and assist them in providing programs of high quality to the greatest number of children possible. With over **30** organized gangs existing within the city's boundaries and recruitment efforts stepped up at dismissal, keeping youth in organized activities after school remains critical. The community realizes the importance of keeping its youth safe and in productive and engaging positive youth development programs. Unfortunately, too few of these opportunities exist, and many programs have waiting lists of children whose parents rely on these services daily.

Bridgeport has over 22,000 children attending its public schools and it is estimated that only 4,000 are served daily by the majority of known after school providers. This leaves an overwhelming 18,000 children to rely on parent, family, or self-care after school. We know for fact that too many children fall into the latter category. We find this totally unacceptable and sincerely hope that you will too. Your support of raised bill

#7348 is crucial to meeting the needs of Connecticut's most vulnerable asset. It's children. By supporting this bill and demanding accountability, you provide a valuable service to families across the state, helping cities like Bridgeport keep children safe, supervised, and learning well past 3:00 p.m.

Attached are some facts about the Lighthouse Program, which is the city and state's largest provider of after school services.

Lighthouse After-School and Summer Program Statistics Bridgeport, Connecticut

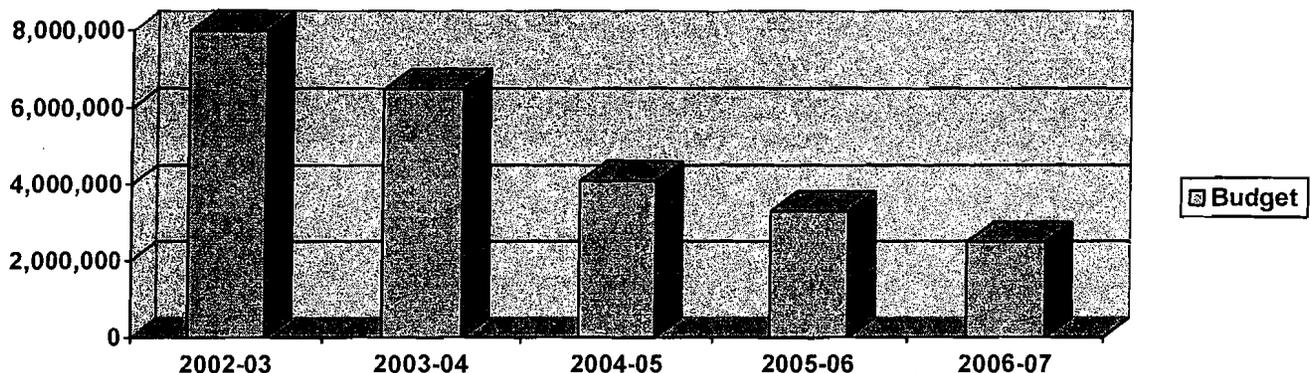
History: Partnership that began in 1993 between the City of Bridgeport, Board of Education, and numerous faith and community based organizations, as well as institutions of higher education. *The program is nationally recognized for excellence.*

Serving: 2,800 Bridgeport children in grades K-8 during the school year from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. daily and during the summer for five weeks from 9:00 – 5:00 p.m. daily. Programs take place in public schools.

Offerings: Includes healthy snack, homework/tutorial session, curriculum based activities, recreation, sports, computer and video technology, arts and crafts, educational board games, music, dance, drama.

Percent of Public School Student Population Served: Approximately 13% for the 2006-2007 school year.

Budget History:



Recent Evaluation Findings:

Yale 4-year study shows academic growth, higher expectations of success, socially acceptable behavior, and a lower body mass index among participants when compared to children in parent, family or self care during after-school hours.

MRM yearly evaluation shows that **96.2% of participating students are rarely absent from school, 91% had a reduction in discipline referrals, and 63.4% of parents were more active in their child's school. Additionally, 2006 findings for Lighthouse participants are significant for Reading, Writing, and Math. The average CMT Mathematics score of Lighthouse students exceeded the district score in grades 3-8 and the average Reading and Writing score of Lighthouse students exceeded the district score in grades 3,5,7, and 8.**