

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee
In Support of Funding for After School and Summer Youth Programs

March 3, 2015

Submitted by Michelle Doucette Cunningham
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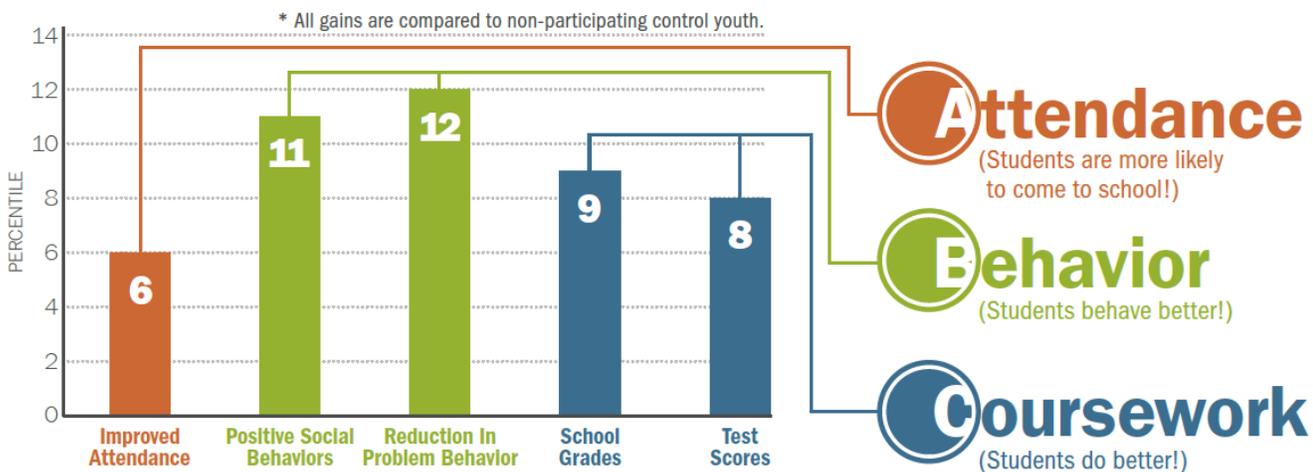
Good evening, Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Michelle Doucette Cunningham, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut After School Network, a statewide alliance representing the thousands of children, parents and staff who participate in after school and summer programs all across the state.

I am here this evening to urge you to **oppose the \$10,771,641 in cuts to funding for after school and summer programs** for children and youth that were included in the Governor's proposed budget, in particular:

- Priority School District Grants: Extended School Hours and Summer School Grants eliminated -\$6,494,451) (SDE)
- Pilot funding for Summer Learning in the After School Grant line cut -\$300,000) (SDE)
- Leadership, Education, Athletics in Partnership (LEAP) eliminated -\$240,687 (SDE)
- Connecticut Pre-Engineering Program eliminated -\$262,500 (SDE)
- Neighborhood Youth Centers Grants eliminated -\$1,356,379) (SDE)
- School Age Funding in Child Care Services Program (TANF/CCDBG) cut -\$808,056) (OEC)
- Youth Service Bureaus cut -\$1,309,568 (SDE)

Research shows that after school and summer programs improve student learning in many areas.

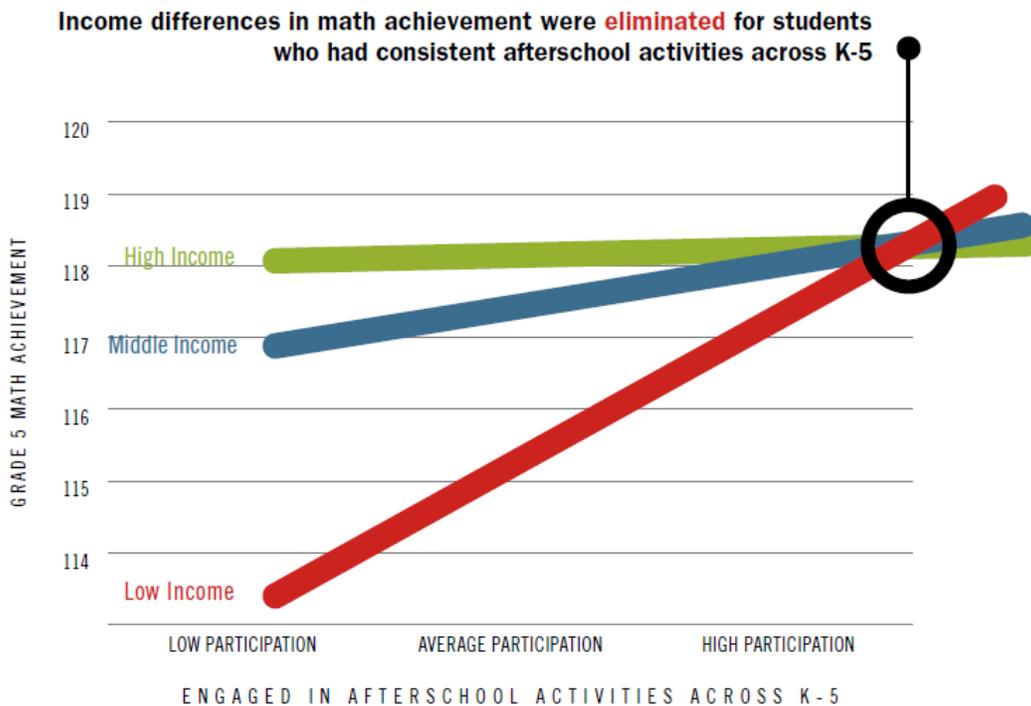
High quality afterschool programs are proven to accelerate student achievement:¹



¹ Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P., Pachan, Molly (2010). *A Meta-Analysis of After-School Programs That Seek to Promote Personal and Social Skills in Children and Adolescents*. <http://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/A-meta-analysis-of-after-school-programs-that-seek-to-promote-personal-and-social-skills-in-children-and-adolescents.pdf>.



After school and summer programs are one of the best tools in the state’s arsenal for combatting the persistent achievement gap between high-income and low-income students. The latest national research by Deborah Vandell and her colleagues at University of California clearly shows that income differences in math achievement were eliminated for students who had consistent after-school activities across grades K-5.



Pierce, K. M., Auger, A. and Vandell, D. L. (April, 2013). *Narrowing the Achievement Gap: Consistency and Intensity of Structured Activities During Elementary School*. Unpublished paper presented at the Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting, Seattle, WA

In closing, I would like to quote Mindi Englart, a teacher in an After School Grant program at Co-Op High School:

“As you well know, there is much gun violence in New Haven. Two years ago, my creative writing class decided to write and collect stories for a book commemorating people they had lost. We spoke frankly about the reasons people join gangs, commit crimes, and engage in violence. When I asked how grownups could help, the overwhelming answer was: Provide safe places for teenagers to be after school and in the evenings so they have a safe alternative to the pressures of the street. A former student who was shot by a gang member initiate came to talk to our class as we began to write our book. He said that as a theater major, rehearsals and shows gave him a legitimate excuse to use when gangs tried to engage him. He said he felt that having a school-related place to go in the afternoons and evenings had literally saved his life.”

After school and summer learning programs supported by these grants keep young people safe, help working families, and help students succeed in school and in life. The benefits are clear and well-documented — please expand the state’s investment in these programs so that they can continue to deliver for Connecticut’s children and families. In so many ways these programs are truly life-savers. Thank you for allowing me to speak with you this evening.