

**TESTIMONY OF Don Maletto Executive Director Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs in  
Connecticut  
BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
HB 5306, AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF  
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

**February 24, 2016**

My name is Don Maletto. I am the Executive Director of the Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs in Connecticut. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to express my opposition to HB 5306, An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood Education.

I am compelled to testify because, if these recommendations are implemented, the Clubs in Connecticut will be faced with closing, limiting memberships and/or raising the cost of membership to a prohibitive amount. Connecticut General Statutes sec. 19a-77 specifically excludes Boys & Girls Clubs from the definition of "child day care services".

The Clubs in Connecticut are youth development organizations, not day cares, baby-sitters or schools. The programs we run are driven towards our universal priority outcomes of healthy lifestyles, academic achievement and good character and citizenship. We believe that there are five key elements to positive youth development: a safe, positive environment; fun; supportive relationships; opportunities and expectations; and recognition. Our programs are designed to incorporate those elements into everything we do – the outcomes being that Club members have higher academic achievement; are more likely to abstain from high-risk behaviors; are more likely to serve their community; and are more likely to engage in regular physical activity. (National Youth Outcomes Initiative, 2014 Outcomes Report, BGCA)

Currently, Clubs in Connecticut serve 57,311 youth through membership and community outreach. Our members may come as many or as few days a week as they choose; parents are not required to tell us on what days their children will attend. This arrangement allows the families we serve the flexibility their circumstance require. We do not know, on any given day, how many children at any age will attend the after-school program.

Average annual membership for after-school Boys and Girls Clubs is \$50 per year. 93% of our Clubs are in urban settings. 32% of our members are teens. Many of our members come from Asset Limited Income Restrained Employed households meaning they are above the federal poverty level, but still do not have enough income to afford the basic necessities of life, such as food, childcare and housing. Most of our members are bused to the Club by their school bus – meaning proximity is also factor in coming to the Club.

The elimination of the child day care license exemption would destroy our model of serving youth in Connecticut. It would force the Boys & Girls Club across Connecticut to have to choose between closing its doors or significantly raising the cost and type of membership to account for the substantial increase in the cost of operating due to the licensing requirements. We also

would no longer be able to serve the high number of young people we currently do. Our members will not go elsewhere – they come to us because of cost, proximity and our safe and fun environment. Our families would require state assistance to pay for after-school programs (increasing the numbers receiving state assistance) and those who did not qualify would be no longer be able to participate in the Club activities.

This proposal undermines the model of the Boys & Girls Clubs, a model that had it's birthplace in 1861 in Hartford Connecticut by three women who wanted to keep kids off the streets. This proposal puts what was started in Connecticut and spread across the country in jeopardy for youth in Connecticut.

For the sake of our communities and our members, we must be allowed to continue to provide our extraordinary programing to at risk youth and to provide the safe, fun and nurturing environment that is synonymous with the Boys & Girls Clubs. I strongly urge you to reject the proposal of the Office of Early Childhood Education that would eliminate the Boys & Girls Clubs' exemption from child day care licensing.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.