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Boys & Girls Club of New Britain, Inc.

H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE  
FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017.

Appropriations Committee  
February 16, 2016

Thank you Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and committee members for the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of the Boys & Girls Club of New Britain, to discuss the proposed elimination of the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant.

The elimination of this grant will result in the reduction of vital services to our most vulnerable children, youth, and teens in New Britain, eighty-seven percent (87%) of which survive at- or below- the federal poverty level. We are hopeful that you will see the great benefit in restoring these funds, as our Boys & Girls Club plays an important role in serving our most vulnerable, and relies heavily on this grant.

Beyond the reduction of services to more than 1,700 youth, who need us most, the elimination of the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant will have a negative economic impact in our community.

Please consider what the Boys & Girls Club of New Britain provides our cherished youth:

- In New Britain, hundreds of vulnerable children, youth, and teens have a safe, adult-managed place to go during after-school hours with nothing to do. They are welcomed and, many of them, fed. We provide a structured after-school environment that is positive and uplifting, further reducing the risky behavior, such as:
  - Increase in criminal behavior
  - Higher potential to use and abuse illegal drugs and alcohol
  - Greater chance of teenage (and younger) sexual behavior

Our Club is open after school and on weekends, providing nurturing mentors, structured recreation, and youth development activities and programs.

- As a non-school, academic assistance provider in New Britain, we provide homework help, computer technology training, and long-term consistent academic support leading to graduation.
  - We help the underserved so that they can thrive academically
  - Our Club guides teen through important high school years toward successful graduation
  - We give teens opportunities to explore post-secondary education choices like technical/vocational school or college

When kids achieve academically, they halt any downward social and economic spiral and rely on their own self-esteem, self-image, and academic achievement in order to succeed on their own.

Boys & Girls Clubs in Connecticut receive funding through the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant and use that funding to implement programs that improve academic success, develop healthy lifestyles, and build good character and citizenship in our members.

These programs enable our Club to extend and reinforce what is being taught in school, provide vital mentoring for youth, and give structure to many children, youth, and teens who would otherwise flounder, suffer, and become demoralized as they face a life of poverty.

Today we impact the lives of children, youth, and teens in New Britain with proven, outcome-driven programs, and have done so since 1891.

Boys & Girls Clubs in Connecticut are part of our state's history and landscape, dedicating much of our efforts to help close the achievement gap for so many young people who attend our clubs.

Clubs have a very real impact on a young people's lives during the critical out of school time, and on weekends and in the summer months. The state of Connecticut has been a great partner in the collective effort to bring opportunities to those children who are challenged by the achievement gap. The budget Governor Malloy has presented puts the breaks on these efforts by eliminating all funding from the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant.

Please consider restoring the Neighborhood Youth Center funding so that communities like ours—New Britain—and others who serve at-risk youth, are able to continue to positively contribute to the future of our next generation.