



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB  
OF BRISTOL FAMILY CENTER**

Michael Suchopar  
Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Club

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

Appropriations Committee  
February 16, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and committee members;

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs to discuss the proposed elimination of the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant. The elimination of this grant will result in the elimination of many staff positions, the elimination of highly effective programs, the reduction of children served at our clubs and, most importantly, it will threaten the viability of one of Connecticut's most effective prevention programs for our children. The economic impact of this cut will be felt by countless youth, especially some of our neediest youth served in our inner city clubs.

The Alliance consists of seventeen organizations serving over 57,000 young people in twenty three towns and cities. There are few youth services organizations in the state that have such a large scope of services. Boys and Girls Clubs provide safe havens that have programs that supplement the school day by providing afterschool educational and recreational opportunities, thereby keeping children well involved during after school hours when they are most susceptible to unhealthy behaviors.

Clubs in Connecticut receive funding through the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant and use that funding to implement programs designed to improve academic success, develop healthy lifestyles and build good character and citizenship in our members. These programs, and others like them, enable our clubs to extend and reinforce what is being taught in school.

During this period in our state's history we are faced with two monumental issues. First, how do we provide every child with the opportunities that are necessary to become healthy, productive and caring individuals? Secondly, how do we as a state assure that there are adequate resources to develop these opportunities for children to become the types of individuals that can strengthen our state and our country?

As a state and a nation, we spend enormous amounts of money on the remediation of children who have social, emotional and health related problems. This is money that is well spent; however, we cannot lose sight of the social and economic impact of preventing children from developing the types of life styles that require the highly expensive remediation systems that are funded by the state. The Neighborhood Youth Center Grant annually provides Boys & Girls clubs with approximately the same amount of money required to provide services for two youth at the Connecticut Juvenile Training School for one year.



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Does it not make social and economic sense to invest the same amount of money in prevention services for 57,000 children as it does to spending that amount of money for the remediation of two children? Without the services of Boys & Girls Clubs, if only one tenth of one percent of the 57,000 children we serve (many in inner cities) required remediation at the training school, the annual financial burden to the state would be nearly \$23,000,000.

Our outcome data speaks for itself; our children have better school attendance, they have higher graduation rates, fewer drug and substance abuse issues and less involvement in criminal activities than state and national norms. This speaks to their strong character and their sense of responsibility to themselves and to others. In simple terms, they are good citizens.

At his point, when every dollar spent by the state needs to have the greatest possible return on investment, there is no better spent dollar than one that is used for developing the health and wellbeing of our children. And, there is no organization that is better at healthy and successful youth development than the Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs.

I understand that you must make budget cuts; yet I ask that you do not cut in areas that could lead to higher risk for our children, which ultimately leads to higher costs for our state.

I appreciate the burden that you carry for us and thank you for considering the inclusion of the entire amount of the Neighborhood Youth Development Grant in the budget.

Sincerely,



Michael Suchopar  
Chief Professional Officer  
Boys & Girls Club of Bristol Family Center