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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 Boys & Girls Club of New Haven and 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 staff cuts, program elimination and the reduction of children served at our clubs. The economic impact of this cut will be most severe for our inner city clubs.

The Alliance consists of seventeen organizations serving 57,000 young people in twenty three towns and cities. Boys and Girls Clubs provide a safe haven that has programs that supplement the school day by providing afterschool educational and recreational opportunities. The Club has been a major resource in the New Haven community for over a century. Young people have relied upon the opportunities and resources offered by the Club to help them succeed in school, learn critical life skills, prepare for adulthood and have a safe, fun and affordable place to spend their out-of-school hours.

Our kids are in crisis. Here's what we know:

- ✓ 3 out of 10 of kids won't graduate on time.
- ✓ Juvenile crime escalates between the hours 3 and 7pm, when kids are left unsupervised.
- ✓ 3 out of 10 kids are obese or overweight.
- ✓ 1 out of 5 young people live in poverty.

Disturbing statistics, but the Boys & Girls Club of New Haven is making an impact.

- ✓ In 2014, 100% of Club kids graduated high school. 87% expect to go to college.
- ✓ The Club is open *every* day after school, when kids need us most.
- ✓ Through our mentoring initiatives, we have seen the hardest to reach kids' lives transform.
- ✓ All of our Club kids participate in physical activity *every* day.
- ✓ The Club is family –centered, working to break the cycles of generational poverty.

In 2015, we served over 1200 young people at four (4) program sites, ages 5-18, through our after school, mentoring, summer, sports, teen and community programs. This is more than any

other youth serving organization in New Haven. While our budget is limited, there are no limits to the dedication of our staff who work to empower our members, celebrating every victory for kids that often feel less than victorious. I dream of what we could accomplish if resources were not an obstacle.

Clubs in Connecticut receive funding through the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant and use that funding to implement four 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.

The Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs is a strong partner in the effort to close the achievement gap for so many young people who attend our clubs. Clubs have a very real impact on a young person's life during the critical out of school time. 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.

The Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs is dedicated to measuring the impact of the club experience.

- Research in the Education field has shown for some time that students with frequent absences and behavioral incidents have lower levels of academic achievement and are more likely to drop out of school.<sup>1 2 3 4 5</sup>
- Studies suggest that quality after school programming can influence those risk factors, especially school attendance<sup>6 7 8</sup>.
- Thanks to a new partnership between the Charter Oak Group, the Connecticut Department of Education, and the Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, we are

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Children in Poverty. (2008, Sept.). Present, engaged & accounted for: The critical importance of addressing chronic absence in the early grades. New York, NY: Chang, H. & Romero, M. 7b

<sup>2</sup> Epstein, J. L. & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. *Journal of Educational Research*, 95(5), 308-318. 8

<sup>3</sup> Gottfried, M.A. (2010, June). Evaluating the relationship between student attendance and achievement in urban elementary and middle schools: An instrumental variables approach. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(2), 434-465.

<sup>4</sup> Balfanz, Herzog and Mac Iver, 2007, citing Alexander, K. L.; Entwisle, D. R. and Kabbani, N. S. (2001). "The Dropout Process in Life Course Perspective: Early Risk Factors at Home and School," *Teachers College Record*, 103, 760-822.

<sup>5</sup> Balfanz, R. *Putting Middle Grades Students on the Graduation Path: A Policy and Practice Brief* (Westerville, Ohio: National Middle School Association (now known as Association for Middle Level Education), June 2009), <http://www.amle.org/Research/ResearchfromtheField/tabid/1642/Default.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> Kauh, Tina J., *AfterZone: Outcomes for Youth Participating in Providence's After-School System, Public/Private Ventures*, August 2011

<sup>7</sup> Arbretton, Amy et al, *Making Every Day Count: Boys & Girls Clubs' Role in Promoting Positive Outcomes for Teens*, May 2009

<sup>8</sup> Vile, J.D., Arcaira, E. & Reisner, E.R. *Progress toward high school graduation: Citizen Schools' youth outcomes in Boston*. Washington, D.C.: Policy Studies Associates, Inc., 2009

- now able to see the influence Boys & Girls Clubs have on these risk factors for the members we serve and compare them to their peers across the state.
- In Connecticut, in the 2013-14 school year, almost 11% of the students in grades K-12 statewide were chronically absent (they missed more than 10% of school days).
  - In a study of more than 6,600 Boys and Girls Club members in Connecticut, we found that our members were 60% less likely to be chronically absent when compared to students across the state.

The Alliance is a statewide entity with the ability to adapt our collective services to the needs of the state and is the optimum partner to provide these critical out of school time services. Please consider restoring the Neighborhood Youth Center funding and lets continue in this work together providing "Great Futures" for the children who need us most in Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and consideration.