



TESTIMONY OF THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF THE LOWER  
NAUGATUCK VALLEY  
BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
HB 5306, AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE  
OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

February 24, 2016

My name is Shaye Roscoe. I am the Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley, and 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 Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley will be faced with closing, limiting memberships, and/or raising the cost of membership to a prohibitive amount.

The Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley is a youth development organization, not a day care, babysitter, or school or school- readiness provider. The programs we run are driven towards our universal priority outcomes of healthy lifestyles, academic success, 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, Boys & Girls Clubs of America)

The Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley is chartered under Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Our organization currently serves 2,048 members. Our average daily attendance by members is 620. In 2015, our programs served 300 youth who were not members; they either “dropped-in” or participated in a program(s). 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. This means that we are prepared every day for 600 young people.

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Annual membership for after school at the Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley is \$150 per year. Seventy percent (70%) of our members are from single family households, and sixty percent (60%) of our members receive free or reduced-cost lunch. 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, child care, 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.

Like many other urban areas, the Lower Naugatuck Valley is riddled with the symptoms of poverty. The members of our Club are at risk of dropping out of school, engaging in drugs, alcohol, tobacco, early sexual activity, and violence. Through outcome-focused programs that include athletic and recreational activities; enrichment programs, including mentoring; and other preventative services, the Club provides positive reinforcement and guidance to stem the problems facing today's youth. We are dedicated to enabling all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens.

The elimination of the child day care license exemption would destroy our model of serving our community. It would force the Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley to have to choose between closing its doors after 60 years 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. These children, especially our teen members, would be on the street or home alone after school, further impeding the progress of these underserved youth.

This proposal undermines the model of Boys & Girls Clubs, a model which has successfully helped boys and girls for—in our case—over 60 years. This proposal puts futures in jeopardy.

For the sake of our communities and our members, we must be allowed to continue to provide our extraordinary programming to at-risk youth and to provide the safe, fun, and nurturing environment that is synonymous with 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shaye A. Roscoe".

Shaye A. Roscoe  
Executive Director

SAR:amw