H.B. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIAL ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Appropriations Committee
March 6, 2019

I am writing this testimony in support of H.B. 7148 that provides funding of the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant. The Boys & Girls Club of Greenwich is a member of the Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs (the Alliance) and it is through the Alliance that Neighborhood Youth Center Funding is made available to our Boys & Girls Club.

The Alliance consists of fifteen organizations serving 86,000 young people in twenty-two towns and cities across thirty-two Club sites in Connecticut. Boys and Girls Clubs provide a safe haven that has programs that supplement the school day by providing afterschool educational and recreational opportunities.

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 persons 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.

In 2014, the Superintendent of Greenwich Public Schools, stated that Greenwich has an achievement gap in which “Too many of our African-American and Latino Students, especially those who are also from low income families, continue to perform well below the averages of our Asian and Caucasian students*.” The school district recognizes that many of the children who are falling behind also attend the Boys & Girls Club’s After-School Program and, therefore, it would be beneficial to work with the Club to help those students who need more intensive academic support.
A hallmark of the Boys & Girls Club of Greenwich is our Academic Success programming. The Club is committed to helping children complete their homework and continue to learn in the hours after school. State funding would us to continue to implement one of our signature programs, *Bridge to the Success*. The *Bridge to Success Program*, an intensive tutoring program designed to play a role in reducing the achievement gap for Club members in fifth through eighth grades, will help us provide greater individualized instruction for the members who need support the most.

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 supporting Neighborhood Youth Center funding and lets continue in this work together providing “Great Futures” for the children who need us most in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Bobby Walker, Jr.
CEO of Boys & Girls of Greenwich