Samuel S. Gray, Jr.
President and CEO
Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford, Inc.

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

Appropriations Committee

March 4, 2019

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

Over 150 Years Caring for Hartford’s Youth

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford began in 1860 when four women decided that boys who roamed the streets needed a safe, positive place to go after school. Since then, we’ve fulfilled that mission for hundreds of thousands of Hartford’s young people, preparing them to be productive, caring and responsible citizens.
That first Hartford club has become the largest youth-serving organization in the world, with over 4,000 Clubs and 4 million members.

A Great Idea in 1860; A Better Idea TODAY

Today’s Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford is more than just a safe place. We provide a proactive alternative to school failure and the cycle of poverty that grips many of the families whose children we serve. The Club offers academic, nutritional and civic programs that help children at every stage of development:

- Primary schoolers struggling with homework
- Teenagers making the difficult transition to adulthood
- High school students facing choices about college and career.

Our impact extends to the families and communities of the children we serve. Our afterschool programs and nutritional dinners enable parents to work, knowing their children are in a safe and nurturing environment. We impact the community by increasing graduation rates, lowering teen pregnancy and crime rates, and increasing volunteerism.

Impacting the Community: Inside the Numbers:

- Hartford’s high school graduation rate is 70%; 95% of our members are on track to graduate from high school and 90% aspire to college.
- Hartford’s teen pregnancy rate is 15%; for our members, it is less than 1%.
- 1 out of every 5 juvenile crimes occur between 3 and 7PM; our clubs are open 3-9PM.
- 68% of Club members live in single parent homes; 87% of parents say our afterschool programs enable them to work full time.
- The Club will currently impacts the youth of Hartford by providing 945,000 total youth services hours *
- We serve more than 100,000 meals / snacks to members a year ensuring that members get the nutrition they need to learn and thrive.
- For every dollar invested in a Boys & Girls Club, we return $9.60 to the community (BGCA National Study).

Working together, and with your support we will continue to make a difference in the lives of Hartford’s children, one child at a time.

Sincerely,

Samuel S. Gray, Jr.
President and CEO

* Past President