Good evening, members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Michelle Doucette Cunningham, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut After School Network, a statewide alliance representing the thousands of children, parents and staff who participate in after school and summer programs all across the state.

I am here today to urge you to **maintain full funding for the After School Grant Program in the Department of Education budget.** After school and summer programs are one of the best tools in the state’s arsenal for combatting the persistent achievement gap between high-income and low-income students. The latest national research by Deborah Vandell at University of California shows that income differences in math achievement were eliminated for students who had consistent after-school activities across grades K-5.

**After School Grants** -- More than 5,000 children and their families depend on these programs every day after school. The $4.8M in the SDE FY19 budget supports programs in 25 towns and cities at 54 schools all around the state. The demand for these competitive grants is tremendous, and there are three proposals for every one that is funded.

After school programs supported by this grant help working families, keep children safe, and improve student learning. Research shows that the program works -- the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) scorecard prepared by the Department each year shows that they are reaching their targeted participants and making a difference in the lives of young people.

Evaluation results of these grant-funded programs by the University of Connecticut demonstrate that program participants show significant CMT test score improvements in math and reading. The state-funded After School Grant Program is an excellent investment of our tax dollars and deserves substantially more funding so that more students and families can benefit.

After school and summer learning programs supported by these grants keep young people safe, help working families, and help students succeed in school and in life. The benefits are clear and well-documented — please maintain and consider expanding the state's investment in these programs so that they can continue to deliver for Connecticut’s children and families.