Testimony: NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH CENTERS (H.B. 7148)

Good evening and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you tonight.

I am here to discuss the line item H.B. 7148 Neighborhood Youth Center in regards to funding for the CT Alliance Boys & Girls Club in CT.

As a childhood member of the lower Naugatuck Valley Boys & Girls Club, then a staff member for 25 years and now the Executive Director of the Stamford Boys & Girls Club for the past 10 years I fully know the positive impact a Boys & Girls Club can have on a youth.

An important role is that B&G Clubs pick up the pieces for each community we serve. We are open, at night daily after school and throughout the summer when children need us the most. Clubs provide positive mentors, programs and activities, a safe place and hope. The problems the inner city child faces are enormous and because we are located in Bridgeport/NH/Hartford/Bristol/NB/Waterbury/The Valley and Stamford, we are central to helping those children solve problems.

Last year 80,000 children were serviced though CT B&G Clubs.

The children we serve and the problems they face - low income, single parent families, drug abuse, obesity, health issues, violence, crime, poverty, inequality, low academic achievement, low self-esteem....that’s a lot to overcome.

But these children are also willing to learn, enthusiastic, grateful for help and ready to change to a better life. We all need to help!

Here is how you can help us help them.

IN 2007-2008 the CT Alliance of B&G Clubs had a line item of $1,000,000 in the state budget with a match of $1.2 million from the private sector.

Today’s budget is $438,000 more need, less money.

Boys & Girls Clubs are good stewards of funding: we have to repeat the process every year of raising millions of dollars to keep the club in CT open. We cannot afford to waste funding.

- For every dollar invested in a B&G Club it returns $9.60 in current and future earnings and cost savings as calculated by B&G Club America
Here is what it will do for those children in Connecticut...

- Provide afterschool Education Programs including homework help, tutoring STEM programs, literacy programs
- Provide Summer Programs to combat Summer Learning Loss
- Provide a Safe place with positive mentors, allowing single parents and 2 working parent household to hold down jobs
- Provide physical activities and wellness programs to combat childhood obesity and healthy issues
- Provide Teens with programs that lead to college or the workforce
- Combat drug, alcohol and tobacco use with prevention programs
- Provide conflict resolution programs with mentoring and violence prevention to save lives, by giving children an alternative to the streets, to violence and show children the path to a better life!

We are not looking to break the state budget but providing B&G Clubs in CT with $1.6m in funding gives each club $100,000 which in turn provides 80,000 children with opportunity and positive impact to learn and grow.

Not a bad deal for $20 per child

Michael Cotela  
Executive Director  
Boys & Girls Club of Stamford

“Our mission is to enable all youth, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens”

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