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 New Haven (BGCNH) 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.

As a partner in the Alliance, New Haven’s Club reaches over 2,000 youth annually, with comprehensive programs focused on academic success, healthy lifestyles and character and leadership development. The Club has been a major resource in the New Haven community for over a century. Young people have relied upon the opportunities and resources offered by the Club to help them succeed in school, learn critical life skills, prepare for adulthood and have a safe, fun and affordable place to spend their out-of-school hours. Over a critical span of a child’s development, BGCNH helps young people to navigate challenges and provides support to help them overcome daunting obstacles. We build young people’s resiliency skills and strengthen their academic, behavioral and social competencies. Everyday our caring and committed team, most sons and daughters of New Haven, strive to provide an experience that connects youth to the Club, assuring that members participate frequently and stay engaged through high school – and beyond. As young people move from challenge-to-challenge, in their schools, neighborhoods and families, Boys & Girls Club of New Haven stands as a consistent and nurturing presence.

We are currently providing after school and summer programming at five sites throughout New Haven – our main site on Columbus Ave. in the Hill neighborhood; the Eastview and West Rock public housing developments; Lincoln Bassett School in Newhallville; and Bishop Woods School in the Quinnipiac neighborhood. While these partnerships are allowing us to serve more children and families in need of our services, the demand for our services continues to grow. We have successfully doubled our capacity since 2010, and Neighborhood Youth Center Funding helps us to continue and expand this work in the underserved neighborhoods in which we operate and hope to grow.

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.

As partners in The Alliance, we are able to achieve far reaching, measurable impact. As a statewide entity with the ability to adapt our collective services to the needs of the state, we are the optimum partner to provide these critical out of school time services. Please consider supporting Neighborhood Youth Center funding and let’s continue in this work together providing “Great Futures” for the children who need us most in Connecticut.

On behalf of the youth and families we serve, thank you.

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