

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

In Support of the After School Grant Program

Public Hearing: February 13, 2020 Submitted by
Amy Guay-Macfarlane, Assistant Executive Director – Programs
Carol James, Director of Children and Youth Services
The West Haven Community House

Dear Sen. Catherine Osten and Rep. Toni Walker,

The West Haven Community House in collaboration with the West Haven Board of Education and other community partners offers an expanded After School program providing Literacy and STEAM activities/curriculum for 200 students' Kindergarten through 6th grade from 6 elementary and Intermediate schools. We provide much needed, affordable, essential high quality child care programs for West Haven working families. Our academic enrichment programs are project based and linked to Common Core standards. Students participate and enjoy STEAM, (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math), Literacy, Wellness and Social Emotional Learning activities through fun hands on experiential learning.

The West Haven Community House is one of the 75 agencies/schools that received the 2019 - 2021 SDE After School Grant. Through the SDE Grant we are able to offer and expand our STEAM, academic and parent engagement programs. The Grant affords us the opportunity to subsidize a number of identified students who are struggling academically and socially from our city's poor performing and lower income schools. The grant also affords us the ability to provide services for homeless students attending West Haven Schools both at no cost to the parents. The SDE After School Grant allows us to provide much needed support and resources to students who need it the most and at the same time provide a rich learning environment for all the students. Through the SDE After School Grant we are able to hire tutors from surrounding colleges to provide individual and small group academic support. We were able to purchase technology for the program to support academic learning and necessary technical skills. Principals and school personnel support our efforts, working closely with the after school staff. We also are able to offer Family Learning Nights such as Fun with Math, Engineering, and Science etc. thus engaging parents in their child's academic journey and assisting in building the bridge between school and home. We also are able to hold a Multi-Cultural event to celebrate the diversity in our community and program.

I urge you to **maintain full funding for the After School Grant Program in the Governor's proposed budget.** The proposed cuts will have a direct impact on program, families and students. **Without the SDE After School Grant we will be unable to continue to provide the small group/ individual academic support, family engagement programs or the subsidized slots to the struggling and homeless students who attend the program through this grant.** The students identified as struggling academically and or socially will not get the extra small academic group support or the exposure to STEAM, Literacy and Social Emotional Learning activities that essentially they need to be successful in school. The homeless students will be stuck in shelters or hotels after school instead of being with their peers and getting the extra support and resources they and their family need.

Research shows that high quality Afterschool programs can boost academic performance, reduce risky behaviors, promote physical health, and provide a safe, structured environment for the children of working parents. In fact, a national evaluation found that more than 40 percent of students who were enrolled in an after school program received better grades in reading and math. During the last grant cycle a subsidized student was being considered for retention prior to attending the After School Program. After a year in the After School Program receiving small group and individual academic support, exposure to STEAM, Literacy and social emotional activities he not only moved on to the next grade he received an award from the school in math. His mother (a single mom) was so grateful for the opportunity that the SDE After School grant gave her son and was in tears when he went up to accept his math award in front of his school.

Please help us continue to touch the lives of these students and do not allow the Governor proposed budget to pass with the \$530,000 cut from the state-funded After School Grant Program.