

Testimony of
Tammy Papa, Director
City of Bridgeport ~ Youth Services/Lighthouse Program

to the
Appropriations Committee

February 13, 2020

RE: State After School Grant

Good evening. My name is Tammy Papa and I am the Director of Youth Services for the City of Bridgeport. Our department administers the Lighthouse Before School, After School and Summer Program as well as the Youth Service Bureau and Enhancement Grant programs. On behalf of our partner agencies and the children and families we serve with the above funds, I would like to thank Senator Osten and Representative Walker as well as the members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony to you today in support of after school funding. Now more than ever, the after school community of teachers, paraprofessionals, school administrators, parents, children, and social service organizations need your support in restoring full funding and keeping the State After School line item in the budget as it currently exists. Doing so will ensure that at a minimum, the current number of children receiving services will continue to do so.

Below please find a few facts about Bridgeport's Lighthouse Program, which relies on this funding to meet the needs of its students and is currently the state's largest provider of after school services.

Lighthouse After School and Summer Program Statistics **Bridgeport, Connecticut**

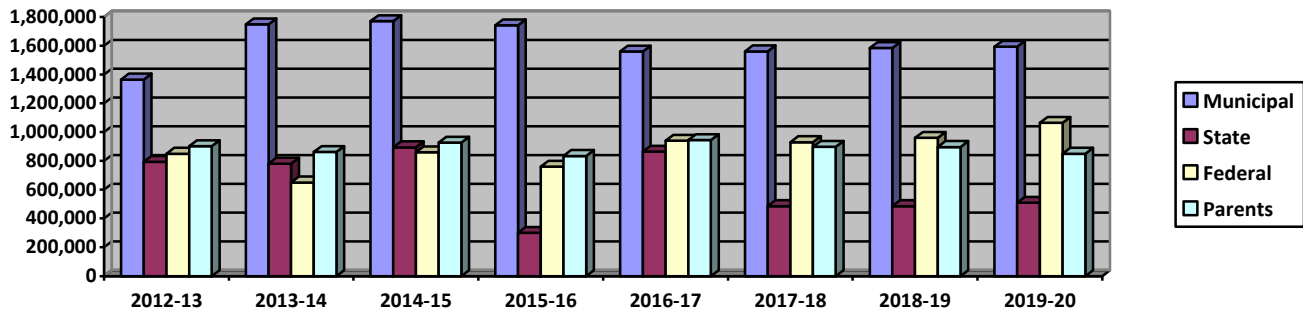
History: Partnership that began in 1993 between the City of Bridgeport, Board of Education, and numerous faith and community based organizations, as well as institutions of higher education. *The program is nationally recognized for excellence.*

Serving: Roughly 2,400 Bridgeport children in grades Pre-K through 8 during the school year from 3:00 – 5:30 p.m. daily and 2,500 during the summer for five weeks from 8:30 – 5:30 p.m. daily. Programs take place in 24 public schools. Of the 339 parent surveys returned during the most recent evaluation, 47% are single parent households, 51% have earned a high school diploma, and 73.5% report household incomes of less than \$40,000 evidence that socio-economic conditions in Bridgeport continue to fall well below state and national averages.

Offerings: Includes healthy meal, homework/tutorial session, curriculum based activities, recreation, sports, computer and video technology, arts and crafts, educational board games, music, dance, drama, social/emotional learning, musical instruments, poetry, and so much more.

Percent of Public School Student Population Served: Approximately 15% of elementary and middle school students for the 2019-2020 school year.

Lighthouse Revenue History:



Impact of Eliminated/Reduced State Funding in 2020-2021 on After School:

Currently, nine after school and summer locations receive state funding. This equates to approximately 40% of our sites overall and roughly 1,000 children. Should state after school funding be cut the recommended 9%, the city would have no choice but to reduce the number of children being served. This would leave approximately 100 children without access to safe, affordable quality programs. Inevitably this has an economic impact on Bridgeport as well. Parents would need to decide between their jobs and caring for their children.

Evaluation Findings:

Research tells us after school works when a number of factors are present. Competent and caring staff along with engaging activities are an absolute must. The Lighthouse Program has consistently provided both as evidence below contributing to better outcomes for our city's youth.

Yale 4-year study shows academic growth, higher expectations of success, socially acceptable behavior, and a lower body mass index among participants when compared to children in parent, family or self care during after-school hours.

MRM evaluation 2015-16 shows 84% of students surveyed and 97% of parents surveyed are generally satisfied with the program with 98% of parents and 87% of students noting the program is safe. Principals and site coordinators note homework help/academic support as well as a safe, supportive and nurturing environment to be the two highest factors contributing to a successful program.

Measurement Inc. evaluation May 2018 indicated staff relationships with students mostly positive, communication between school day staff and after school staff was frequent with more consistency to allow for additional connection to school day academics, principals noted the programs positive impact on family engagement and observations showed students on task and engaged in most program activities. Parents and students alike continue to be overwhelmingly satisfied with the program.

I sincerely ask you consider the impact these needed services have on Connecticut families and specifically the Bridgeport community and urge you to vote NO to any proposed cuts to current funding allocations. We welcome the opportunity for you to visit our city's Lighthouse Program and thank you for your time.