



**Testimony to the Appropriations Committee
In Support of the After School Grant Program
Submitted by Tracey Lay, Chief Talent & Collaboration Officer and
Director, School Age Programs & Development Services
EdAdvance**

February 11, 2020

Sen. Cathrine Osten, Rep. Toni Walker & Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Tracey Lay. On behalf of EdAdvance, one of the six RESC's (Regional Educational Service Centers), I would like to testify on the Governor's proposed budget for the State Department of Education. I would like to testify on behalf of out of school time and summer learning programs. I urge your support for fully funding the State After School Grant Program in the State Department of Education budget.

We currently operate before and after school programs located in 12 public school-based sites, serving 26 elementary, intermediate and middle schools in 8 districts throughout western Connecticut, including **Barkhamsted, Brookfield, Litchfield** (enrichment only), **New Hartford, Newtown, Region 10 (Harwinton & Burlington)** (enrichment only), **Region 14 (Woodbury & Bethelhem)** and **Torrington**. In addition, we operate full day summer programs in **Newtown** and **Torrington**. There is a significant need for these programs in our region.

We have been fortunate to be one of the State Department of Education After School Grant recipients for the past 12.5 years. More than 580 students and their families have benefited from this grant each year. Not only have the students received quality after school programming, but they have had access to a highly successful hands-on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) and Literacy curriculum as well as a Physical Education and Nutrition component. Families in need have received scholarships to attend the program for the first time and it has helped many students gain access to the after school programs that normally wouldn't have the opportunity. This grant has been an asset to our communities in western Connecticut. In addition, it helps with social emotional learning for all of our region's students, as they participate in these before/after school programs.

First and foremost, I am the parent of 2 children and know how important quality after school programs can be to working families. Knowing our children are safe and well cared for in the hours after school is imperative for families, including mine. Studies show that work productivity is affected by this very issue. Productivity goes down after 3 p.m. when students are arriving home from school and parents are wondering where their children are and if they are safe. Investing in after school programs can help build productivity in the work place.

Representing EdAdvance for the past 25 years, I have been actively working with other state and national partners in the field of Out of School Time, including as current Chair of the Board of NAA (National AfterSchool Association) and a former Board Member of the CT After School Network. I have been a member of the After School Advisory Council which is a group formed through the State Department of Education in partnership with the State Department of Social Services and the former Commission on Children and other state agencies and stakeholders, to work as an advocacy advisory group to the Connecticut After School Network.

Connecticut has been a visionary to other states in the field of After School in the past, and we need your support to continue moving forward. A lot has been accomplished, but there is much to do. Many communities in Connecticut, both urban and rural, are in dire need for quality after school and summer learning programs. In these tough times, families need quality programs more than ever

In my various professional roles and as a parent I have personally experienced the positive outcomes after school programs can have on children and youth. I have seen firsthand, what the research shows; how out of school time and summer programs can enhance the overall well-being of our children (emotionally, socially, physically, and academically). In addition to student success; there are numerous other benefits to investing in these programs. Quality out of school time programs support working families, keep kids safe, and provide extra time for learning, helping alleviate summer learning loss. We know these programs have been successful and are a cost-effective way to support our schools, communities and families in Connecticut.

On behalf of EdAdvance and the over 500 families we serve, I wholeheartedly support these efforts and appreciate your consideration for maintaining quality after school programs for the children and youth in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this much needed field.

Respectfully submitted by,

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