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Boys & Girls Club of Milford

H.B. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING
JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Appropriations Committee
March 1, 2021

I am writing this testimony in support of H.B. 6439 that provides funding of the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant. The Boys & Girls Club of Milford 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.

The Alliance consists of Sixteen organizations serving 85,000 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.

This year has brought us all many different and unique challenges and opportunities. The past year our Board of Directors and staff have been committed to doing whatever it takes to make sure the youth in our community have access to the safety, structure, and fun that youth crave and need. Through everyone's efforts we were able to make modifications to our program by partnering with the Board of Education to modify our program from facility based to being able to offer after school programming at each of the eight elementary schools in town. This change allows for us to ensure we are doing everything we can to mitigate the spread of COVID, while also being able to serve youth and their families throughout the community.

In addition, we have increased our hours of operation from 3pm -6pm to 1:30pm - 6pm to accommodate the new school schedule. As well as are offering full club days for days in which children have full virtual learning days. Our goal has been to fill all of the out of school time that families are challenged with. This will allow for parents to get back to their work responsibilities and to be able to rebuild their lives.

We have also conformed to all regulations and guidelines put forth by the CDC, Milford Department of Public Health, as well as the State of CT office of Early Childhood Education. This includes reduced group sizes. Due to the reduced group sizes we have had to increase the number of staff we have had to hire.

The next year is sure to be as unpredictable as the past year has been, and the Boys & Girls Club is focused on continuing to serve our members and their families during this time.

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 persons 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.

The Alliance is a statewide entity with the ability to adapt our collective services to the needs of the state and is the optimum partner to provide these critical out of school time services. Please consider supporting Neighborhood Youth Center funding and lets continue in this work together providing "Great Futures" for the children who need us most in Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity and for being there for the Boys & Girls Clubs throughout the state. Not just now, but always. I also appreciate the opportunity to testify and to share with you how important this funding is to our organizations and the thousands of children we serve.