

Samuel S. Gray Jr.
The Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford, Inc.

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 Clubs of Hartford 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.

Since the pandemic has impacted our organization in March 2020, by April 6, 2020, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford launched its Virtual Boys & Girls Club program for youth.

Since July 6, 2020, we opened to a limited number of youths a summer camp program for youth whose parents or guardians were essential workers with full day services.

BGCH is open to all students in the greater Hartford community daily since Labor Day last year. We are open for after school services Monday through Friday from 3:00 p.m. to 7 p.m.

BGCH is working with the city of Hartford and Hartford Public Schools on a couple of projects during this time.

To address chronic absenteeism, BGCH has partnered with Hartford Public Schools and Hartford Public High School. Since October 2020, during the pandemic, we offer a full day blended learning model for students who are older in age with low credits towards graduation. Students can attend the Asylum Hill Boys & Girls Club for an alternative learning setting designed to accelerate and customized learning experience for students. This is an online and in person learning opportunity for students offered Monday through Friday (Wednesday's professional development day for teachers) from 8 to 2:30 p.m. In the last hour of the day students are offered

Boys & Girls club programming (Money Matters, Career Launch, Degrees to Diplomas). Students who are meeting the expectation and recovering credits towards graduation qualify for job internship and opportunities. Approximately 40 students participate in this partnership. This number is growing.

Since January 11, 2021, the BGCH has partnered with the city of Hartford and Hartford Public Schools to offer all city of Hartford resident students in grades kindergarten through 3rd grade full day learning opportunities. Students can arrive at a Boys & Girls Club and participate in online learning with their school and teachers from a Boys & Girls Club. Additional support is provided by BGCH to support student learning. Learning PODS are offered Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6 p.m. Once students are done with their online learning they transition to Boys & Girls Club programming and activities. Approximately 104 students are targeted for this full day free service to student. A grant award was received from the city of Hartford to facilitate this offering.

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.

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 let's continue in this work together providing "Great Futures" for the children who need us most in Connecticut.