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February 3, 2025

Senate Committee on Education

Subject: Testimony in Support of Afterschool Learning and Enrichment Grant Program

Dear Chair Senator Frederick, Vice-Chair Senator Weber, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Alliance of YMCAs, I am grateful for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of funding for afterschool programs. As longstanding providers of these essential programs across the state, YMCAs in Oregon have seen firsthand the vital role afterschool programs play in enriching the lives of children, supporting families, and strengthening communities.

This legislation recognizes community partners' expertise and vital role by ensuring that funding is directly accessible to community-based organizations (CBOs). We welcome the opportunity to collaborate on identifying the most effective funding mechanisms for community-led programs while upholding the highest standards of safety and enrichment during critical afterschool hours. During the pandemic, our Alliance, working with our partners - the Oregon Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, the Oregon Alliance of Camp, and OregonASK - was trusted by the state to determine the funding amounts and manage the distribution and reporting for millions of funds to nearly 100 CBOs (ECC4-YMCA, OAYMCA, 2021ORCAMPs)

YMCAs adhere to strict national guidelines and standards to deliver high-quality, high-impact programs, but we still encounter barriers when navigating local and state requirements within the education system. To ensure equitable access to funding, we need clear, strong language that streamlines administration without imposing redundant compliance and safety measures or creating unnecessary burdens on the organizations - both large and small.

We strongly support SB 896 to fund afterschool grants, ensuring that every child, regardless of socioeconomic background, has access to high-quality afterschool programs. This investment is not just about programs—it is an investment in our youth, our workforce, and the future of Oregon. We urge you to take decisive action in supporting this critical funding. Thank you for your leadership in championing afterschool programs. We stand ready to assist and welcome any questions.

Sincerely,

Marisa Fink, Ed.D.  
Executive Director

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