



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

February 3, 2025

Senate Committee on Education

Subject: Support for Afterschool Learning and Enrichment Grant Program (SB 896)

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

I am the Chief Operating Officer at the Eugene Family YMCA in Eugene, Oregon. I strongly support SB 896 to fund afterschool grants, ensuring all children have access to high-quality programs. Afterschool programs are a central component of helping thousands of our State's youth develop to their full potential and to support Oregon's employers seeking to strengthen their employees' needs for high-quality programs to support working families.

This legislation ensures direct funding access for community-based organizations (CBOs), recognizing their expertise. Annually, our YMCA serves nearly 750 unduplicated children in 20 afterschool sites serving both urban and rural school districts in Lane County.

Summer and afterschool programs play a crucial role in supporting children's and adolescents' mental health by providing safe, structured, and enriching environments. These programs offer numerous benefits, including:

1. **Emotional Well-being & Stress Reduction** – Engaging activities, supportive mentors, and positive peer interactions help reduce anxiety, depression, and stress, offering children a sense of stability and belonging.
2. **Social Connection & Relationship Building** – Programs foster friendships and teamwork, helping children develop communication skills, empathy, and self-confidence while combating loneliness and isolation.
3. **Physical Activity & Healthy Routines** – Many programs incorporate sports, outdoor play, and mindfulness activities, which are proven to boost mood, reduce stress, and promote overall well-being.
4. **Academic & Personal Growth** – Low-pressure learning environments support academic confidence while creative and skill-building activities enhance self-esteem and resilience.
5. **Safe Spaces & Trusted Mentors** – These programs provide a safe, supervised setting where children can express themselves, seek guidance, and receive emotional support from caring adults.

Investing in summer and afterschool programs is an investment in the mental health and well-being of our youth, helping them thrive both in and out of the classroom. We urge your support for SB 896 and stand ready to assist.

Thank You,

Brian Steffen
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