



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA**

November 29, 2023

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chair
Committee on Education & The Workforce
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education & The Workforce
United States House of Representatives

Chair Foxx and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BCGA), thank you for hosting a *Member Day* hearing to elevate issues in health, education, and labor issues. **I write today to call on Congress to prioritize out-of-school time (OST) programs and the youth they serve as we prepare for the 118th Congress, 2nd Session. To accomplish this endeavor, we urge you to support and pass the bipartisan Youth Workforce Readiness Act (H.R. 3416).** The hours outside of school are increasingly crucial to a young person's success and well-being, and community based, nonprofit OST organizations are uniquely positioned to deepen our investment in our future workforce. We stand ready with proven solutions to create great futures for youth.

Improving educational opportunities in schools is critical to strengthen our nation's economic productivity and competitiveness, but it remains even more important that we also ensure there are quality out-of-school settings that continue learning, further enhance youth development, and prepare them for the 21st century workforce, boosting their economic potential over a lifetime. Research shows – and Boys & Girls Clubs can prove – youth are worried about whether they have the skills necessary to secure a job in the face of a rapidly changing economy. The work to support all youth and teens is more critical than ever and we urge you to support this endeavor.

For over 160 years, Boys & Girls Clubs have provided safe places where young people can learn and grow. We believe every young person deserves a great future, meaning every youth that enters our doors graduates on time and is college or career ready while living a healthy lifestyle and demonstrating good character and citizenship. Today, the Boys & Girls Club movement has grown to include over 5,200 Clubs in 50 states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In a typical year, Clubs serve 3.3 million youth throughout the country, including over 2,400 school-based Clubs, over 1,100 Clubs in rural areas, 256 Clubs in public housing facilities, 470 affiliated youth centers on U.S. military installations worldwide, and over 230 Clubs on Native lands.

Clubs offer young people an environment to build resiliency by developing the essential skills that make them ready for work and life. In fact, a growing body of evidence has shown that Boys & Girls Clubs afterschool and summer programs are effective at boosting school outcomes, strengthening pathways to postsecondary education or careers, and improving youth emotional well-being. According to our National Youth Outcomes Initiatives report, Club youth compared to their peers nationally are:

- 35% more likely to be on track to graduate high school (on time), 25% less likely to skip school.
- 183% more likely to report a sense of belonging at their Club than at high school.
- 36% less likely to get into a physical fight.
- 32% less likely to consume alcohol or tobacco.
- 95% of Club members feel they have the skills necessary to be successful in a job, and 57% of Club members in high school reported work experience in the past 12 months, compared to only 40% of their peers nationally.

Investing in a skilled and robust workforce is essential to the future of America's local economies. To achieve that goal, the bipartisan Youth Workforce Readiness Act (H.R. 3416) will establish a competitive grant through the Department of Labor to support eligible youth-serving, out-of-school time organizations that provide workforce preparation programs for youth ages 6 to 18. The program focuses on four pillars that OST organizations know from experience are critical to preparing youth for success: Essential skill development, career exposure, employment readiness & certifications, and work-based learning. These core approaches are implemented in partnership with local employers and educators to prepare youth for the workforce and help employers fill their gaps with qualified candidates. **We urge you to co-sponsor and pass this critical bill as part of a larger initiative to strengthen and support out-of-school time and the critical role they play to ensure every youth in America succeeds.**

As one of the largest out-of-school time providers in the nation, BGCA stands ready to identify leaders and speak to the importance of the issues highlighted as we look ahead to the 118th Congress, 2nd Session. **Once again, we call on you to prioritize out-of-school time by co-sponsoring and passing the Youth Workforce Readiness Act (H.R. 3416).**

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact Ilana Levinson, Boys & Girls Clubs of America Senior Director of Government Relations, at ilevinson@bgca.org or 248-320-2730, with questions.

Sincerely,



Missy Dugan
Senior Vice President, Government Relations

CC: Members, Committee on Education & The Workforce