

- Good evening, Chairperson Abney/ DiPalma
 - Committee members.
- Thank you for listening to us this evening.
- My name is Vanessa Baker I am an employee in iGaming department at Bally's Casino
 - Even though I am off the front line of secondhand smoke, still dehydrates me.
 - The smoke travels through the vents, wires, walls and is still affecting my asthma.

I have health problems I do not deserve due to working in secondhand smoke

I have monitored my health for the last 30 years; my health thrives when working in a nonsmoking environment.

When I'm working in a smoking environment my health rapidly deteriorates bringing on outrageous medical costs

- from respiratory issues, depression, anxiety, low energy
- to skin problems, and eye irritation
- And, because I am asthmatic, I continuously cough up grey phlegm.
- In 2018 when I was told Tiverton had the state-of-the-art ventilation system
 - The PPE to protect me, it didn't work.
- Truth be told, my respiratory system was comprised in days of the reinstatement of **indoor** smoking

- My doctor tells me this time my respiratory system is now affected forever.
 - Front line casino workers need a hazmat suit to work in a smoking environment.
- Subjecting innocent people to the 7,000 volatile organic chemicals released from cigarettes takes away from our quality of life and it is inhumane.

The first time I saw Bally's General Manager Craig Sculos was 45 days after the reinstatement of smoking when he opposed the repeal in front of the House Finance committee

- Mr Sculos grounds were for the of loss of revenue and loss of jobs.
- He also justified the state-of-the-art ventilation system as proper PPE for employees

The following Saturday April 16th, 2022 Mr. Sculos approached me when opening a third section of table games.

- On a holiday weekend, Bally's Tiverton was at full staff, in full operations.
- Since the reinstatement of smoking,
 - business,
 - and employees slowly diminished.

We are currently at half-staff and half operations at both locations.

Despite the way the law is written, Bally's requires employees to obtain a doctor's note.

- I was refused a transfer to Twin River Nonsmoking section
- Or the poker department

- Until I was out of work sick for 5 months and quoted the law, an employee has the right to opt out of working in a smoking area without adverse impact or action.
- Most employees know this but are afraid to stand up.
- They worry about what will happen and how they will support their families.
 - Because the nonsmoking sections are disregarded and is all lies.
 - 6 tables could not supply the demand of employees who do not want to work in the smoke.
 - The new expansion is on the same floor as the smoking section. Smoke doesn't know to stay on one side of the building.
 - Day shift has a waiting list
 - Swing shift employees' concern to work in non-smoking is because the section are forced to close early
 - the employees on swing shift lose hours, which means they lose pay.

Tiverton employees do not have a nonsmoking table games section.

- With that in mind,
- non-smoking table games sections
- DOES NOT help the slot attendance, wait staff, security, cashiers, the drop team, EVS, the state lottery, maintenance, restaurant workers, or the office workers, like myself.

Our neighboring states Connecticut and Massachusetts remained smoke-free.

They are taking our nonsmoking clients

- who have more disposable income
- and do not mind the drive.
- I have one customer who tells me she drives 57 miles 3-4 times a week to play at Foxwoods

The old mentality of losing business if smoking stops

- may have been true
- before covid.

Gamblers gamble, drinkers drink, and smokers will smoke even if they need to step outside.

Bally's gives us training tools to help addiction. Why not let smokers take a break to smoke outside.

There should be no more Butts! Casino Workers deserve to breathe fresh air!



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Testimony Re: House Bill 8047 Building Opportunities for Out-of-School Time

House Finance Committee

May 9, 2024

Jessica Vega, Senior Policy Analyst

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice our support for House Bill 8047 and thank Representative Shallcross Smith for sponsoring and Representatives Casimiro and Diaz for co-sponsoring. This bill would provide \$4 million to support comprehensive and effective afterschool, school vacation, summer learning and workforce development programs for students in grades kindergarten through 12 and require an annual report to the General Assembly and the Governor on the status and progress of the program. The bill designates the Rhode Island Foundation as the financial sponsor responsible for receiving the funding allocated by the general assembly.

High-quality, organized afterschool, summer, and out-of-school time programs improve the supervision and safety of youth, promote positive social skills, improve attendance and behavior, and, with sufficient dosage, improve student achievement. Quality out-of-school time programs provide engaging activities that are intentionally designed to promote youth development and are taught by trained, dedicated instructors who work effectively with youth. Youth who participate consistently can show improved competence, caring, and connections. **School hours only cover 20% of the time children and youth have available for learning, forming friendships, developing, and practicing skills, and exploring interests. What children do during out-of-school time matters for success in school and life.** Yet, there are not enough affordable, high-quality, out-of-school time programs to meet the needs of families and youth.

Currently, the state manages two systems to provide access to afterschool and summer programs. One of these systems is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Education to invest federal 21st Century Community Learning Center funds and served approximately 5,288 children and youth during the 2022-2023 school year and 1,577 children during the summer of 2022. The other system is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services which provides childcare subsidies to school-age children to attend afterschool and summer programs.

Most children and youth in Rhode Island have parents who work. Between 2018 and 2022, 79% of Rhode Island children ages six to 17 had both parents employed, higher than the national rate of 72%. Afterschool programs offer a safe and educational environment for students to learn and grow by participating in enriching afterschool programs while their parents are at work. Additionally, **89% of parents in Rhode Island support public funding for afterschool programs.** There is a substantial gap between high-quality afterschool and out-of-school time opportunities available to youth from low-income families compared to opportunities for youth from higher-income families, and higher-income families spend almost seven times more on enrichment activities which contributes to persistent gaps in student outcomes.

Out-of-school time programs provided crucial services to students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic including assistance with academics, accessing technology, and addressing food insecurity for families. State investments are needed to expand access to high-quality afterschool and summer programs and to build and sustain an effective out-of-school time workforce.

We urge you to pass this important legislation. High-quality afterschool and summer programs are a key strategy for helping children who have lost learning time due to the pandemic catch up on academics and can help reengage children and youth who had high rates of absenteeism or been disengaged. These programs also support children's social-emotional health.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.