

To: House Finance Committee

House Bill No.8047 RELATING TO EDUCATION -- BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES IN
OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

From: **Wujuudat Balogun**

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill No.8047

Date: May 9, 2024

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is **Wujuudat Balogun** and I am a Youth Advocate and Board Co-Chair at Young Voices. I am here in support of HB 8047 introduced by Rep Shallcross Smith, which provides \$4 million to support after school and school vacation, summer learning workforce development programs for K-12 students with annual reports on status and programs.

As a senior in high school now, I've come to realize the profound impact of after-school programs like the ones supported by the Boost Bill.

Reflecting on my journey, it's clear that these programs have been instrumental in shaping who I am today.

Reflecting on my journey, I realize that after-school programs have been more than just extracurricular activities—they've been transformative experiences that have shaped my character and aspirations. They've provided me with a second home, a platform for personal growth, and a vibrant community where I've found belonging and purpose.

Without the opportunities afforded by these programs, I wouldn't have had the chance to develop the leadership skills and confidence to lead professional development workshops or participate in national panels where youth voices are heard and valued. They've empowered me to advocate for myself, my peers, and our shared future.

The significance of after-school programs extends far beyond their immediate benefits. They serve as essential pillars of support for youth, fostering academic achievement, promoting personal well-being, and offering a safe haven from the challenges of everyday life. By investing in these programs, we're investing in the potential of our youth and the prosperity of our communities.

So, as I stand before you today, I implore you all as legislators to rally behind the Boost Bill and prioritize the expansion of after-school programs. Together, let's ensure that every young person has access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

Thank you for your time and attention today.

Wujuudat Balogun

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