

To: House Finance Committee

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

From: Yarisa Diaz

Date: May 9th, 2024

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Yarisa Diaz and I am a Program Manager at Young Voices, I am here in support of House Bill No.8047; in support of the Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) Bill which would invest \$4,000,000 to support after-school and school vacation, summer learning workforce development programs for K-12 students with annual reports on status and programs.

As someone who had lived in Providence as a youth and participated in many afterschool programs, I can speak to the impact that afterschool and summer programs had on my life. Growing up in a low-income family, I relied on afterschool programs and summer programs that were available to the community. If it had not been for afterschool programs like AS220, Onward We Learn (formerly the College Crusade), and the YMCA, I would have gone home to an empty home. I would have not learned how to navigate college, learn leadership skills, or find an outlet to express myself through the arts. It is through these programs that I was able to access higher education and received a full scholarship to my alma mater Brandeis University, graduating with Magna Cum Laude.

As a young professional in the out-of-school time field who now works directly with high school-aged youth, I see the impact in all the youth who engage in our programs and other youth-serving organizations in Providence. I have had the honor to see students be able to engage civically by testifying in these hearings and discussing with stakeholders the changes they want to see in their schools, their cities, and their communities. I have had the opportunity to hear about the successes of students who have been able to secure scholarships and college acceptances to universities locally, regionally, and nationally. Most importantly I feel though, is being able to witness students grow from first engaging in the program as shy and soft-spoken individuals to becoming powerful advocates and public speakers.

Students should have access to comprehensive and effective afterschool and summer learning, and workforce development programs. By making this investment in our youth, we are investing in our future.

Thank you for your consideration and your time.

Yarisa Diaz

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