

March 17, 2026

Chair Joseph M. McNamara  
House Education Committee  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for H. 7905

Dear Chair McNamara and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Shauna Lewis and I serve as CEO of the Smithfield YMCA. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H. 7905.

I write today on behalf of the Smithfield YMCA which operates out-of-school time programs for Rhode Island children and families. We know how important before- and after-school care is to working parents, employers, and the broader economy. When families cannot find reliable care, it becomes harder for parents to get to work, stay at work, and support their families.

H. 7905 addresses a simple issue of fairness. Many out-of-school time programs operate in public school buildings. But when school-age programs seek higher BrightStars ratings, they can be evaluated on building-related factors such as room setup, furnishings, storage, bathroom access, quiet space, and outdoor play areas. In a public school setting, many of those factors are features of the building itself and not something the provider can meaningfully control.

As a result, a provider can offer strong staff, strong programming, and safe, supportive care, yet still be held back by conditions that come with the site. That matters because BrightStars ratings affect CCAP reimbursement. For school-age care, the difference between a 1-star and 5-star reimbursement rate is meaningful, and when ratings are limited by school-building conditions, it makes already difficult programs even harder to sustain.

Survey data collected from YMCA-operated school-based sites across Rhode Island reflects how widespread this issue is. Across 21 school-based YMCA sites serving 705 children, providers reported recurring challenges tied to physical conditions in public school buildings, including storage, room configuration, bathroom access, quiet space, and outdoor play setup. These findings reinforce what many providers already know from experience: school-based programs are too often judged on aspects of the facility that have little to do with the quality of care being delivered.

This bill does not lower standards for health, safety, staffing, or program quality. It simply recognizes that school-based providers should be judged based on the quality of the program they run, not on building conditions they cannot reasonably change.

H. 7905 is a practical, common-sense step toward fairness and sustainability, and I respectfully ask for your support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Shauna Lewis  
CEO, Smithfield YMCA