

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Kate Aubin and I am the Director of Youth Services at Providence Public Library (PPL). I am a supporter of out-of-school time programs serving students in Providence. I urge you to vote in favor of House Bill 5976.

This bill would provide four million dollars to expand and strengthen after school, school vacation, summer learning, and workforce development programs for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12). It would also fund professional development for staff who work directly with young people.

This investment is important because out of school time programs serve as a crucial support and helping hand to youth of color and low-income families throughout our community. According to the Afterschool Alliance, nearly 59,000 children in Rhode Island would be enrolled in an afterschool program if one were available to them. Demand for afterschool in Rhode Island has reached an all-time high as parents seek out the benefits of these programs: "keeping kids safe, helping them learn and grow, and providing peace of mind for working families. As families face barriers to participation, such as cost and accessibility, there is strong support behind public funding for afterschool programs in the state."

PPL's youth programming offers a welcoming environment where youth empowerment and leadership opportunities, instruction that accommodates diverse learning styles, parent engagement, and student supports help address common barriers to youth participation. We offer vast programming options including: summer employment for teens, semester long STEAM programs for high school credit, arts based drop in programs for children and teens, and STEAM mentoring programs for young children. All of these programs are offered to youth and families free of charge and we regularly have waiting lists for all of our programs for youth ages birth - 18 years old. There is a critical need for expanded education opportunities that strategically reach our city's most vulnerable populations— low income families, immigrants, students with disabilities, and English language learners. Organizations, like Providence Public Library, provide that need, but as nonprofits, we are in dire need of financial support for the work we do.

I respectfully urge you to pass House Bill 5976 to ensure that more Rhode Island students have access to high-quality learning opportunities year-round.

Sincerely,

Kate Aubin

Providence Public Library

150 Empire St, Providence, RI 02903