



April 28th, 2026

To: House Finance Committee  
House Bill No. 7501 RELATING TO EDUCATION -- BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES IN  
OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME (BOOST)

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

The youth of Young Voices wish to express their strong support of HB 7501 introduced by Representative Shallcross Smith, which allocates \$100,000 to support socioemotional and mental health supports for out-of-school time programs in Rhode Island. This bill is important to us because third spaces are vital places for young people to meet, learn, and share power. Without programs like Young Voices, our thoughts and ideas would often go unnoticed. Out-of-school time programs give young adults like us a place to feel safe, seen, and loved.

Currently, almost 60,000 urban youth in our state are without afterschool program opportunities, and even more lack access to social workers and counseling support. It is critical that we invest in out-of-school-time programs so that every student has access to comprehensive and effective socioemotional learning during afterschool and summer programs. Thanks to the support we have been provided, the youth of Young Voices have been able to participate in mental health awareness, testimony writing, the creation of a fashion show, advocacy, research, and many other opportunities that would never be offered during the normal school day. Millions of young people like us rely on these opportunities, and it is imperative that we continue to fund them and make them accessible to all youth.

We hope that you make the right decision and pass HB 7501, for the benefit of Rhode Island youth and the flourishing of all.

Thank you for your time and attention today.

Sincerely,

The Youth of Young Voices