

BOOST Bill HB7501

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Dear Representative Marvin L. Abney and House Finance Committee,

My name is Charlotte Boudreau and I have worked in the Out of School Time (OST) field for over 30 years and realize the impact those programs have on our students throughout the state and the positive results it brings to students in grades K-12. For the last 7 years, I have been working as a Youth Development and Education Consultant.

I am asking you to please pass **BOOST Bill HB7501** during this session. By establishing a \$100,00 yearly funding option, focused this year on mental health issues within our schools, you acknowledge the importance of providing these opportunities to the children and youth in our state. Programming that is being offered currently, doesn't come close to meeting the needs of students and their families who want to participate. Rhode Island cannot continue to be unwilling to help fund OST initiatives any longer. RI needs a permanent solution to helping the many programs that are already providing such important work.

In addition, these programs benefit Rhode Island's working families, many of whom need reliable supervised safe spaces for their children. With the number of students on wait lists for OST programs throughout the state, how can people who want to work accomplish this without having a dependable place for their children. We hear daily how many places of employment are struggling with their inability to hire sufficient staff. Without additional funding, not only will our OST programs continue to struggle financially, but the workforce itself will be unable to hire the number of people they need.

Please help support these vital programs. Learning doesn't end when the school day is over. That's why it's so critical to invest in quality afterschool learning opportunities. OST programs have been teaching valuable life skills, providing a safe space for youth, as well as helping to cultivate the successful futures of our youth. As someone who can make a difference on a state level, your support for afterschool programs is greatly appreciated and needed.

I thank you for your time and consideration in support of **BOOST Bill HB7501**,
Charlotte Boudreau