

Dear members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Chrys Santos, I am a 10th grader at Blackstone Academy Charter School and a youth at Young Voices, an afterschool program in Providence, RI. I am writing today in support of bill H7501 which would provide funds to after school activities and extracurriculars for mental health support, school engagement, and other parts of their programming.

The bill is really important to me because I struggled with depression for a very long time in high school, often feeling stressful and draining. Which made it worse, and I had no motivation to do well in school or to do well for myself. When I discovered Young Voices, a youth organization, I felt like I had purpose. I started advocating for myself and others in my community, and found my voice. Now I have a safe space to be at after school, and my learning doesn't feel limited to only one building. I've gotten to learn about different career fields, advocacy, resume building, and so much more than I would have without an afterschool program.

We need to pass this bill because it could help other teenagers like me feel like they have purpose and can make an impact in their lives and communities. With more funding to afterschool programs, more students will have access to other opportunities that can be life changing.

I urge you to pass bill H7501 so that students, instead of being introduced to their power as a part of the community, are able to grow up with it.

Thank you for your time and attention today.

Sincerely,

Chrys Santos