

House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of HB8489

Dear Chairperson Abbney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is **Craig Danko**, and I proudly serve on the Board of Directors for the East Providence Boys & Girls Club. I am writing in strong support of HB8489, the proposed Youth Development Bond for Boys & Girls Clubs across Rhode Island.

Boys & Girls Clubs are critical community assets that support working families, strengthen neighborhoods, and prepare young people for success in school, careers, and life. Across Rhode Island, Boys & Girls Clubs serve more than 31,000 youth annually through 27 locations statewide.

At the Boys & Girls Club of East Providence, we continue to see growing demand for affordable, high-quality out-of-school programming and youth development opportunities. Families rely on the Club for safe environments where youth can access tutoring, mentoring, athletics, leadership development, social-emotional supports, and workforce readiness programming.

While this proposal includes important facility and infrastructure improvements, HB8489 represents far more than a bricks and mortar investment. This bond would create expanded opportunities for Rhode Island youth by strengthening and modernizing the spaces where life-changing programming takes place every day.

At EPBGC, expanded facilities would allow us to serve an estimated additional 200 youth per day while creating enhanced spaces for teen workforce development, STEM learning, career exploration, and academic support. The bond would also support improvements at Camp Crosby, strengthening summer learning and enrichment opportunities for youth across our community.

Additionally, this investment would modernize aging infrastructure, improve accessibility and safety, enhance HVAC and critical building systems, and create more sustainable and resilient facilities that better support Rhode Island families for years to come. Upgraded HVAC and energy-efficient systems would improve air quality, strengthen environmental sustainability efforts, reduce long-term operating costs, and create healthier, more dependable spaces for youth, families, and staff. These improvements help ensure that

more resources can continue to be directed back into programming and services for Rhode Island children and teens.

This is an investment in Rhode Island's future workforce, communities, and economy.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support HB8489.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support of Rhode Island's youth.

Sincerely,

Craig Danko
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