

I am writing in strong support of the Youth Development Bond funding for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Rhode Island (HB8489).

I serve on the Board of Directors of the Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket, and I am also a former Club kid myself. The Boys & Girls Club played a meaningful role in my life growing up, and I've seen firsthand the impact it can have when kids are given safe spaces, supportive mentors, and opportunities to grow.

This investment would support major improvements to the Club's 20-acre outdoor campus, including upgraded athletic spaces, outdoor learning areas, and a fully ADA-accessible inclusive playground—an investment this property has not seen in decades. Roughly 85% of the youth we serve come from low- to moderate-income households, many without access to safe outdoor spaces of their own.

This project is entirely youth-focused and directly supports academic success, healthy lifestyles, and positive development, while also expanding public access to Pawtucket's riverfront.

I respectfully urge your support for this project and for the bond.

Thank you for your time.

Dereck

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