

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

RE: Testimony in Support of HB8489

Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is **Shaniah Hazard**, and I am a staff member at the East Providence Boys & Girls Club. I am writing in strong support of HB8489, the proposed Youth Development Bond benefiting Boys & Girls Clubs across Rhode Island.

Every day, I see firsthand the impact the Club has on young people and families in our community. Boys & Girls Clubs provide far more than childcare — they create safe spaces where youth receive academic support, develop leadership skills, build confidence, participate in healthy activities, and form meaningful relationships with trusted adults.

Today's youth face increasing challenges related to mental health, school engagement, bullying, and academic success. Boys & Girls Clubs play an essential role in helping young people navigate these challenges while providing opportunities that help prepare them for successful futures.

While this proposal includes facility improvements, HB8489 is about much more than bricks and mortar. This investment would directly strengthen and expand programming opportunities for Rhode Island youth by creating enhanced spaces for workforce development, academic enrichment, mentoring, athletics, wellness initiatives, and summer learning experiences.

At the East Providence Boys & Girls Club, expanded and modernized facilities would allow us to serve an estimated additional 200 youth per day while creating stronger workforce readiness and career exploration opportunities for teens. Improvements at Camp Crosby would also help expand summer enrichment opportunities and provide more youth with access to safe outdoor learning and recreational experiences.

This investment would modernize and improve the environments where critical youth development programming takes place while helping Boys & Girls Clubs meet the growing needs of Rhode Island families and communities.

I respectfully urge you to support HB8489.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shaniah Hazard

Youth Development Professional

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