

## **Written Testimony in Support of the Youth Development Bond (HB 8489)**

Members of the House Finance Committee:

I submit this testimony in full support of the Youth Development Bond funding for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Rhode Island (HB8489).

I serve on the Board of Directors for the Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket. The proposed investment supports a transformative capital project centered on enhancing the Club's 20-acre outdoor campus and revitalizing the surrounding riverfront, in alignment with the City of Pawtucket's broader riverfront development plan.

Planned improvements include upgraded athletic and recreation areas, a state-of-the-art turf field, modernized athletic courts, educational nature trails and outdoor learning spaces, and a fully ADA-accessible inclusive playground - the first major playground investment on this property in decades.

The Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket serves a community where approximately 85% of the youth we support come from low-to-moderate income households, many without access to safe outdoor spaces or backyards of their own. This project is entirely youth-focused and directly supports our mission of academic success, healthy lifestyles, character development, and workforce readiness.

This investment not only strengthens youth development opportunities but also expands community access to green space and helps maximize the long-term value and public use of Pawtucket's growing riverfront corridor.

I respectfully urge approval of this project and the overall bond.

Sorani Gonzalez

Board of Directors – Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket