



**The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma, Chair
and Members of the Senate Finance Committee**
From: Adrienne Gagnon, DownCity Design
RE: Testimony in Strong Support of Senate Bill No. S2452
Date: May 19, 2026

Statement of Support for Senate Bill No. S2452 RELATING TO EDUCATION -- BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME (BOOST)

Dear Chair DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to share my strong support for Senate Bill S2452, introduced by Senator DiMario and colleagues, which provides \$100,000 in the FY2026–2027 budget to support the mental health and emotional well-being of children and youth through investments in out-of-school time (OST) settings.

My organization, **DownCity Design**, provides free afterschool and summer programs in which Providence County teens learn to become community leaders through designing and building service projects to improve public spaces. I have seen firsthand the impact of quality OST programs on a young person's skill development, confidence, and mental health. DownCity Design is a member organization of the Rhode Island Afterschool Network (RIAN), a partnership of organizations promoting young people's safety, healthy development, and learning outside the traditional classroom.

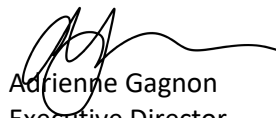
As a working parent myself, I believe that every family should have the opportunity to choose from a range of high-quality, age-appropriate, affordable afterschool and summer programs. We have seen that these programs are essential to a child's success in school and in life. For many young people, these programs tap a learning style or interest that they cannot access in the classroom, helping them grow in confidence, connection, and resilience. OST programs also support our state's economy by enabling working parents to access care for their children during working hours.

Bill S2452 recognizes what we see every day in our work, that OST programs are trusted, relationship-based environments where young people find belonging, stability, and care. In the wake of the 2022 Rhode Island State of Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health, and amid continued reductions in federal funding for schools and student support services, state investment in community-based OST programs is more critical than ever. The BOOST Act's focus on mental health first aid training, trauma-informed practices, peer support, social-emotional learning, and culturally responsive youth-led initiatives reflects exactly what our communities need right now.

Please support the vital work of OST programs across Rhode Island by voting in favor of Senate Bill S2452, so that these programs can continue to keep their doors open, strengthen their capacity to support youth mental health, and expand to serve even more of our state's young people.

Thank you for your public service.

Sincerely,



Adrienne Gagnon
Executive Director