



FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND MEDICAID

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Vice Chair Huffman
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Destiny Tillison, 2019 Ohio Youth of the Year

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid, thank you for hearing our testimony today. For the first time in the modern history of our country, children in Ohio are on track to earn less, to learn less, and to live shorter lives than the preceding generation. My name is Adam Shank and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs. With me today is Ohio's 2019 Youth of the Year, Destiny Tillison. We are here to offer testimony on the budget specifically regarding Ohio's TANF Block Grant.

Background. Through 2008, the Ohio Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs received \$2 million per fiscal year in TANF Block Grant funding administered by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to provide targeted afterschool and summer programming to at-risk youth. When the market suffered, funding was cut. To date, unlike the economy, funding hasn't recovered. In the proposed version of the budget, Ohio Clubs are allocated \$1 million a year in TANF funds.

In the same proposal, \$2.2M per year is aimed at afterschool programming serving 600 kids in a single community and another \$2M per year to a pilot program. We believe, as the governor, that investment in out-of-school time is an economic and moral imperative. We therefore support a broad range of programs and providers including those proposed. However, when we are talking state investment, return on that investment must be considered. Government funding makes up a mere 7% of Club finances, versus the far less sustainable 95% of other proposed TANF recipients. Clubs have been in Ohio for 126 years. Clubs serve over 60 communities

across the state. Clubs provide over 1M free meals and snacks each year. Clubs possess the largest privately held youth development data set in the world. Clubs are backed by a national network of programming, measurement tools, and operational support. And, most importantly, TANF funds allocated to Boys & Girls Clubs of Ohio will impact more than **43,000** Ohio youth with a documented return on investment of **\$11.35 to \$1** as evidenced by a study conducted by the Institute for Social Research and the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan.

Boys & Girls Clubs provide access to comprehensive youth development programs during out-of-school time. These high-quality programs support documented positive outcomes related to academic success, workforce development, good character and citizenship, and healthy, drug-free lifestyles. Clubs offer a safe, supervised, and affordable option for families, youth, and teens in Ohio's highest need neighborhoods. When youth are involved in a Boys & Girls Club, they are less likely to engage in risky behaviors and more likely to succeed in school with the confidence and skills necessary to be productive, caring, responsible citizens

Current TANF funding requires programming for **2,400** eligible youth in each of two focus areas at more than 60 locations throughout the state. While this funding contractually underwrites only a small portion of our served population, the impact of these dollars is felt on a broad scale. More than 80% of Club kids qualify for free and reduced school lunch. Access to TANF resources is critical to program quality, Club operations, and continued community access as demand continues to grow across the state.

Proposal. Collectively Boys and Girls Clubs of Ohio are the second largest youth serving organization in the state—second only to public schools. This makes the Ohio Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs a critical partner in the state with the capacity and experience to tackle the significant challenges facing youth today. Ohio Clubs envision a future where all youth – regardless of their zip code or circumstance – have access to the high quality youth development experiences that are necessary to achieve a great future. We are proposing a multi-pronged approach in collaboration with the State of Ohio to enhance the quality of, and expand access to, youth development programming in the state. To accomplish the goals outlined in the following brief, the Ohio Alliance

of Boys & Girls Clubs respectfully proposes a \$4 million appropriation of TANF Block Grant funds over the next biennium. This investment will serve three key impact areas:

- 1) Enhance and scale current evidence-based programming targeting opioid prevention, behavioral health interventions, and workforce readiness;
- 2) Scale youth program quality initiative at current Club locations, improving youth outcomes for Club at-risk youth and demonstrating a method of quality standardization that can be adopted by any youth and teen program throughout the state; and
- 3) Increase access to Clubs for youth by opening a select number of new sites and expanding capacity at existing sites.

At the proposed level of state funding, Clubs will be able to serve more than double the required/underwritten number of at-risk youth, improve program quality and increase the impact on those served while extending access in critical areas of the state.

Impact Areas

Targeted Evidence Based Programming

Opioid Prevention. Ohio Clubs are poised to take a comprehensive approach to prevention in vulnerable communities throughout the state via implementation of evidence-based curriculum. *Positive Action* is widely recognized as an evidence-based model by agencies that include the U.S. Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse, SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP), and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). A series of validated studies have shown Positive Action to reduce drug, alcohol, and tobacco use by 71%. This vital programming can enhance peer-to-peer mentoring and leadership development among youth with the potential to reach beyond the Club walls. As noted in the 2017 report by the Ohio Joint Study Committee on Drug Use Prevention Education, “risk factors for drug use and violence among youth are particularly prevalent during the hours between the end of the regular

school day and the end of the parent or caregiver work day, when many children are unsupervised.”¹ Out-of-school programs can offer a natural extension of a comprehensive drug and violence prevention strategy by providing a safe haven and promoting the development of social skills that help prevent drug use and violence.”

Workforce Development. Club kids across the state today are demographically Ohio’s workforce of tomorrow. By 2020, 60 percent of jobs will require education and/or training beyond high school and if the lack of a skilled workforce is not addressed, the economy will face a shortage of 5 million workers. With increased funding Boys & Girls Clubs can serve as a critical component of workforce development in Ohio. Our Clubs can help build the next generation of Ohio workers with a plan for the future. Nationally developed, the BGCA Pipeline Program promotes critical employment skills among youth, preparing them to be first-job ready, and encourage communities, small business, and corporations to invest in teens and their career development through direct partnerships and placement opportunities.

Behavioral Health Interventions. Clubs are also prepared to bolster programs aimed at behavioral health intervention. Youth violence has a crippling ripple effect on neighborhoods, families and communities. It traumatizes victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and the community at large and has a long-term negative impact on individuals’ and communities’ ability to thrive. Various forms of violence – defined for this proposal as child maltreatment, teen dating violence, suicide, intimate partner violence, sexual violence and aggression, youth, violence, negative effects of addiction, bullying and suicide – are interconnected and have common risk and protective factors. Initially targeting youth suicide prevention, Ohio Clubs look to leverage increased state funding into an opportunity to approach to staff training, data management and youth development in a way that will reduce violent behavior in communities and the resulting trauma experienced by youth. Partnering with Ohio’s network of children’s hospitals, the Ohio Alliance will be able to use increased funding to extend clinical behavioral health interventions into an area currently underserved – the out-of-school space.

¹ <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/DrugUsePreventionEducation> 5
<http://workforce.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Future%20of%20Workforce%20Report.pdf>

Youth Program Quality. High-quality out-of-school programs have strong positive effects on the academic, social, and emotional lives of youth.² Club programming provides measurable success—increased funding will expand the quality and access of these programs to more children in our state. Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) standards, a multi-state research project funded by the W.T. Grant Foundation designed to raise the consistency of quality in youth-serving programs, will be deployed across Ohio to demonstrate the impact of increased funding on program quality. The better the quality of an out-of-school program, the better the outcomes of youth participants, and the greater impact in Ohio.

Site Expansion. Increased state funding would have significant effects on Clubs' ability to sustainably expand sites into underserved areas of the state. Investments in program quality and Club operations systemically drive growth. As Club quality and capacity increase, so does community impact and engagement. This engagement bolsters the support necessary needed for the expansion of sites. Similarly, state funding often serves as a catalyst in securing additional community and private investments. Clubs have proven very adept at leveraging this public-private partnership allowing our 16 Clubs in the state to operate over 60 sites in 23 communities across the state. We estimate that with the requested funding, Ohio Clubs will be able to open between 2-5 new sites in communities currently not being served.

Conclusion. Using out-of-school time as the vehicle, Clubs across the state are prepared to tackle Ohio's greatest challenges while providing the state a fiscally justifiable investment. Because the block grant is federal pass through money, an increase wouldn't cost the state any additional dollars but would have a systematic impact in reducing state expenses in the areas of health care, remedial education, and the juvenile justice system. Data shows that *for every \$1 invested in Boys & Girls Clubs, the State of Ohio and its communities recognize \$11.35 in economic benefits.*³ With afterschool and summer options, Ohio Clubs can offer more hours of programming over the course of a year than public schools. Funding at this level would impact over 43,000

² Vandell, D., Reisner, E. and Pierce, K. (2007). Outcomes Linked to High-Quality After School Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the Study of Promising Practices <http://www.gse.uci.edu/docs/PASP%20Final%20Report.pdf>.

³Institute for Social Research and the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan (December, 2015).

Ohio youth providing them access to programs on a scale greater than any other local youth service organization and produce a research based ROI of over **\$45.4M** for the state.

While these and other statistics help confirm the positive impact TANF funding has through our Clubs, the true reach of this investment can be found in the lives it touches directly. I'd like to invite Ohio's 2019 Youth of the Year, Destiny Tillison to share with you what the Club has meant to her.

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10 different schools. 7 elementary schools. Dozens of lost memories. And a constant fear of hopelessness. Hi, I'm Destiny Tillison and this was my childhood.

Growing up, I made sure not to open up, or get too close to anyone because I didn't know how long we would stay this time and if I could handle another lost relationship. When I was 5, my mother left my father after years of domestic abuse. Following this split, I was moved from house to house and city to city. My mother always ensured that me and my siblings had a roof over our head, but after her relationship with my father ended, I lost a part of my mother.

She would drop me and my siblings off at one of her friends houses where we would stay for a few days or even weeks. Never knowing when we would see her again. During this time period, my sister and I were told to stay in the attic of the house with our baby brother. Our "babysitter" would show us the pictures my mom would post with groups of friends at nice restaurants and clubs sometimes, as if she was mocking us. My mother always told us she had to leave us because she didn't have the money to support us. So why was she out having fun while we suffered? Why didn't she miss us like we missed her? When she would pick us up, something was always different. Her hair would be longer, she would be in a different car, she would be happy.

She would come get us like nothing had happened. Once she would take us home, we thought things would be different; better. And for the first day or two, they would be. She would promise us that she wouldn't leave again. Soon after this honeymoon phase, reality set in. She would leave us each night and get picked up by

random cars. When she was with us, she was on the phone talking and laughing while the stomachs of me and my siblings growled and my baby brother sat in his last diaper. We stayed in a house with no carpet, no heat, and no hope.

One night when my mother had left, we heard someone coming through our window down stairs. I put my little brother in the closet and prayed that he didn't cry. My sister and I didn't know what to do. We were 7 and 8 years old alone with no phone. Thankfully, a neighbor had seen the person crawling through the window and came in with his gun. I cried. I couldn't see the bright future ahead of me that the teachers at school talked about. I longed for the father I hadn't had. Someone to keep me safe from everything around me.

Soon after this night child services were called to the house. My mom gave me and my sister a long talk on what to say and how to answer each question asked of us. She warned us that we would get taken away from her if we didn't say the right things. I told the lady that my mom was always home, that we always had food, and that I never felt in danger. I lied.

I always felt alone, my mom always sold our food stamps, and I never felt safe. I was 7 years old and I felt hopeless. My mom couldn't afford or care enough to put me in sports, so I knew that I had to do well in school if I wanted to go to college. I pushed myself and my siblings to work hard no matter the circumstances. I have been on honor roll my entire academic career. Even the days when I had to miss school to watch my younger brothers, I always found a way to get my work done.

Years later after being moved around from school to school, my father came back into my life. I was now in high school and didn't care too much for a relationship with him. However, after tension levels rose in my mother's house, my sister and I wound up in Orrville living with our father. I had to leave all of my friends my junior year of high school. I felt like the world was against me.

That is until I was told about the Orrville Area Boys and Girls Club. My father worked second shift so I went to the Club after practice for a meal, homework help, and love. While I was at school my father was home and

when I was home my father was at work. It was a rarity seeing each other throughout the week. Going to the Club, gave me the privilege of having someone to talk to whenever I felt like I had no one else.

If it weren't for the club, many nights after practice I would have went without a meal. Growing up homework help did not exist in my home. If I didn't understand something it was my responsibility to figure it out alone. Whenever I became a member at the Club, I received help with my homework for the first time in my life. These things alone lessened my worries and stress tremendously.

Going to the Club gave me something to look forward to. It gave me something I hadn't had before... HOPE. The Orrville Area Boys and Girls Club has had and continues to have a large impact on my life. An impact that can only be fully understood to those who have grown up through the club. The Club is and will always be my home and I look forward to the day when I am able to give back to the organization.

Through the help and love of the Club, I know what my future looks like. I will be attending Cleveland State University in the Fall majoring in Pre Law and Psychology. After completing my undergraduate, I will attend law school. I will be successful. When I'm feeling down I always remember one thing,

"I have worked too hard to fail"

Failure is the lack of success.

Things may not always go how I plan, but I will never fail.

I will never fail because I will never stop working. I will never settle and I will never be satisfied.

Please continue to support Boys & Girls Clubs in Ohio.

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Chairman Hackett, Ranking Member Thomas, members of the Committee, thank you for your time today. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.