



Chairman Edwards, Vice-Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee,

We urge you to include afterschool programs, which currently serve more than 177,000 Ohio youth, in the state's cannabis tax revenue distribution plans.

Using this revenue stream to fund Ohio's afterschool and summer learning programs is one of the smartest investments we can make. These programs are proven to set kids and families up to thrive. They help youth learn, grow, make smart choices, avoid drugs, heal from trauma, gain real-world skills, and graduate from high school. Programs help working parents keep their jobs, connect families to resources in the local community, and reduce crime in our neighborhoods.

Now that 24 states have legalized adult-use cannabis, many—such as Alaska, California, Colorado, Illinois, and Vermont— are investing funds back into youth development programs like afterschool because they positively impact young people during the years when they are learning how to think critically, develop relationships, and make responsible decisions. For example, in Alaska, afterschool programs are using funding to implement a cannabis education and prevention curriculum for youth as a strategy to combat future substance use and misuse.

This is Ohio's opportunity to make similar investments in our kids' futures. Inclusion of afterschool programs would better support Ohio families and youth for the following reasons:

The hours between [2 and 6 p.m.](#) are the peak time for youth to commit crimes, use drugs, and engage in other risky behaviors. In Ohio, more than [265,000](#) kids are alone and unsupervised after school.

Afterschool programs can turn that time of risk into opportunity by building protective factors to help youth avoid substance misuse, make smart decisions, and ultimately reach their full potential. Surrounded by caring mentors, youth engage in deeper learning and enrichment, develop life skills, and are supported on their path towards adulthood. [Research](#) shows that afterschool programs help kids make academic gains, improve work habits and school attendance, and graduate on time.

Afterschool and summer programs are especially critical now as we navigate an urgent youth mental health crisis. In [Ohio](#), 43% of high schoolers reported feeling sad or hopeless, and 10% attempted suicide, making suicide the [second-leading](#) cause of death for youth and young adults in the state. Afterschool programs serve both as a fundamental setting in which healthy development and learning take place, as well as an intervention through which social and emotional skills and competencies are fostered. They provide safe spaces for youth to connect with peers, build positive relationships, learn life skills, enjoy healthy meals, and be physically active while helping them develop self-control, confidence, and strong social skills.

Ohio parents [strongly support](#) and rely on these programs:

- 92% are satisfied with their child's program
- 87% are in favor of public funding for afterschool, and that support is high across the political spectrum

- 76% say programs help them keep their jobs
- 74% say programs reduce the likelihood youth will engage in risky behaviors
- 69% say programs keep kids safe and out of trouble

Voters agree. In a nationwide [poll](#), 8 in 10 voters said that afterschool programs are an absolute necessity for their community, and they want newly elected federal, state, and local leaders to provide more funding for them.

What's more, afterschool programs provide a solid return on investment. [Research](#) shows that every \$1 invested in afterschool programs saves at least \$3 by reducing crime and juvenile delinquency, increasing kids' earning potential, and improving kids' performance at school.

But for every Ohio youth enrolled in a program, five more are waiting to get in. That's more than [814,000](#) youth who are missing out on these life-changing opportunities because our state does not have enough programs for everyone who needs them. Access to programs is far worse in low-income communities and communities of color, both of which have been historically and disproportionately targeted and affected by drug enforcement.

Demand for programs in Ohio remains strong. More than \$318 million was requested to support afterschool and summer programs, but only \$89 million was provided through the American Rescue Plan. We need more funding to improve access for all who need it.

Because of afterschool's overwhelming public support, solid return on investment, and proven track record for preventing drug use and crime as well as supporting youth mental health, we request that 10% of

cannabis revenue funds be allocated to these programs. Let's put this new revenue right back into our communities and use it to support kids and families today. Thank you for considering afterschool for Ohio's cannabis tax revenue.

"we are not speaking in favor of legal adult-use but we believe when it is legalized that we must invest in protecting our youth through positive youth programs".

"The need is great in Ohio. These funds would not meet all of that need; but they would be the start of developing a state program that begins to meet those needs."

And maybe have in reserve "Other states and localities have used cannabis revenue as a down payment on meeting the needs of kids and families by focusing the dollars on those who can benefit the most from these supports."

Is it over the top to start talking about a "Buckeye Afterschool Program".