



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

March 22, 2023

Chairman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 33. My name is Aaron Baumgartner and I have the pleasure of serving as the CEO of the Putnam County YMCA. I am here today testifying on behalf of the Ohio Alliance of YMCAs, the nonprofit organization that represents the 162 YMCAs throughout the state. We are a grassroots driven and governed organization that advocates and educates on behalf of the YMCAs and their mission.

The Putnam County YMCA serves residents in Putnam County by strengthening our communities so that all people can reach their potential through healthy living, youth development, and social responsibility. As a member of the Ohio Alliance of YMCAs, we are part of the 162 YMCAs that serve the citizens of the state of Ohio.

On behalf of Ohio's YMCAs, we would like to ask the committee's support on four issues important to the Ys and the communities the Ys serve.

Sales Tax

First, we ask for nonprofit fitness facilities, such as YMCAs and Jewish Community Centers, to be exempted from sales tax. You may recall support for this initiative in past years in the House.

Ohio is one of only three states that tax nonprofit fitness memberships, such as YMCAs. However, this wasn't always the case. Up until the mid 1990s, Ohio YMCAs were tax exempt in all aspect of their mission work. These nonprofit fitness memberships were mistakenly included in a tax revision.

YMCAs are charitable, nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations that are dedicated to youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Every day they take on challenges that will shape our communities' futures - challenges like the academic achievement gap, chronic disease, and social isolation. In the pandemic, YMCAs stepped into the fray to provide even more community supports such as emergency shelter for first responders, child care for first responders' children, and feeding programs.

Removing Barriers to Learning

Second, we ask the legislature to renew our TANF grant to continue to remove barriers to learning and development for school-aged students.

Ohio YMCAs provide over 450 before and after school and summer day camp programs throughout the year, making the YMCAs the single largest school age provider in Ohio. As



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the largest provider, YMCAs are deeply concerned about removing barriers to young peoples' academic achievement and development.

In 2021, the General Assembly generously granted Ohio YMCAs \$500,000 per year in TANF funding to better support school-aged young people. YMCAs invested in a continuous quality improvement process tool called Hello Insight to ensure our before and after school care and summer day camp programs are enabling students' academic achievement and development.

In the 13 months of using Hello Insight, Ohio YMCAs were able to support 10,370 young people with the tool. We can report the following successes:

- 85% of the young people grew their desire to learn, their ability to regulate their emotions and behavior and persist through life's challenges, and their academic self-efficacy.
- 63% of the middle and high-school aged students we served reported leaving their Y program with good or great knowledge of college options, college entrance requirements, and financial aid options.

Foster, Kinship, and Bridges Families

Third, we ask the legislature to renew our TANF funding supporting foster care families, kinship care families, and Bridges program participants.

In 2022, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) partnered with Ohio YMCAs to provide memberships at no cost for certified foster homes and approved kinship caregivers who meet certain eligibility criteria. Bridges participants, who are people aging out of foster care, and their children also were eligible.

We have provided community and connection to 1,233 families from August 2022 to November 2022.

Belonging and connection, and time and space for families to be together, are critical components to healthy and well-adjusted young people and adults. Decades of research shows that belonging and connection, and family support, reduce physical and mental issues dramatically, including depression and chronic disease. Our children's mental and physical health is at a critical breaking point, and partnerships like the one between the state and Ohio YMCAs are key components to stabilizing families and young people.

Child Watch

Lastly, we ask the legislature to reverse a change made in 2019 that impacts the Ys' ability to care for children while their parents are at a Y.



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In sweeping changes made to child care statutory language in 2019, a small provision of the Revised Code was changed to prohibit YMCAs from offering a service we call child watch to employees at the Y. Child watch is offered to an adult's child if that adult is on the premises of the Y, and the care does not exceed two hours. Before the change, employees were allowed to use child watch.

A YMCA's part-time employee, such as a yoga instructor, could bring his or her child with them to the Y, place the child in child watch while they instructed their class, and then pick up their child an hour later. While current law still allows that for YMCA members, it prohibits employees, such as a yoga instructor, from using it.

Madam Chairwoman and members of the committee, thank you for your time and considering our priorities. We look forward to continuing to work together to find ways to support Ohio's families. I'd be happy to answer any questions.