



**BGCP TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 500: ROCKWOOD CATALYST CAMPAIGN**

Tuesday, March 10, 2015

**LETTER SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF KEITH MEISENHEIMER, SENIOR CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE**

May it please the Committee,

I write in support of SB 500. I would welcome the opportunity to testify on SB 500 but I am hearing a domestic relations trial today. I am a retired Circuit Court Judge, having served on the Multnomah County Family Law bench from 1999 to 2011. Prior to becoming a judge, I was a Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney for 23 years with a caseload primarily focused on violent crime and child abuse and neglect.

I have been on the Board of Directors of Portland Boys and Girls Clubs for more than 20 years. My involvement resulted from my conclusion (reached after countless hours spent with victims of violent crime and children who had been abused and observing their anguish) that no matter how well the justice system responds to crime, we can never make the victim whole. Prevention is far, far more valuable. I wanted to find and support an effective juvenile delinquency prevention program. My research led me to the Boys and Girls Club program.

I knew most juvenile delinquency occurs in the hours after school. I learned that by providing a safe place where youth are exposed to activities which support their learning in school and expose them to positive role models during those hours, Boys and Girls clubs had been documented in at least one study in 1988 by Columbia University to reduce delinquency by 13%. I firmly believe that the programs offered by Boys and Girls Clubs have greatly improved over the time I have been involved and are even more effective today.

I now recognize that the benefits of providing the Boys and Girls club program to at risk youth is not limited to delinquency and adult crime prevention. This program also provides an enormous boost to the children's success in school and family and ultimately in the work place and in the community.

I would like to make one final, very critical point in this brief letter. There can be no question that government resources have become terribly short of need. The Portland Boys and Girls clubs attract very substantial private support for this effort to help at risk youth. Investment of public funds though SB 500 will enable us to stretch those dollars to be extremely impactful in that mission.

Respectfully Submitted,

Keith Meisenheimer  
Senior Circuit Court Judge