

April 5, 2017

Chair Representative Margaret Doherty
House Committee on Education
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301



Dear Chair Person Representative Margaret Doherty:

Please accept this letter as testimony related to HB 3191.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Greater Santiam operates five service sites in Lebanon and Sweet Home, serving youth from age 3 – 20. Our organization which serves 600 local children a day and nearly 6,000 a year, is driven by a mission to provide critical programs, services and opportunities designed to prepare any child for success, in school, work, post-secondary education, and life.

Childhood poverty in Linn County is 27% - compared to 22% for the State and 13% for Benton County. 29% of Linn County children live in food insecure homes – compared to 24% for Oregon and 21% for Benton County. High school cohort graduation rates are also dramatically lower than the state average in both Sweet Home and Lebanon (67% and 62%). In Sweet Home over 17% of children are identified as homeless and at Foster Elementary, over 70% of the student population live in households with incomes below the poverty level.


Studies show that summer learning loss for children from low income families can in the end constitute a nearly two grade difference when entering high school (i.e. low income 9th grade students are likely to test at 7th grade level). This is an extremely concerning variance especially in an area like ours where poverty rates are high and high school graduation rates are low. For the past four summers we have been delivering an expanded summer program with the goal to decrease summer learning loss – especially for children from low income circumstance.

Feedback from local principals and administrators over the past four years have validated our belief and the belief of others, that we can change the outcomes for our low income students by engaging them in meaningful AND fun activities over the summer months. Children who have participated in Club summer programs return to school in the fall needing less remediation, with higher levels of focus, and a desire to reconnect with school.

I know you won't disagree when I say we need more summer options for low income youth, especially those in rural, economically challenged communities, not fewer. The perplexing part of this formula is that as a local non-profit we can only do so much. Summer programs which are usually extended hours are costly, financial support that will allow us to serve low income children at low or no cost is desperately needed and would allow us to achieve a deeper impact.

If I can provide any additional information or answer any questions, please contact me at 541.258.7105 or kris@bgcgratersantiam.org.

Respectfully,


Kris Latimer
Executive Director

Investing in East Linn
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