

February 28, 2019

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

I respectfully submit this written testimony in reference to budget funding for the Youth Development Division (YDD) and the youth programs they administer.

In Corvallis there are approximately 100+ youth each weekday who are benefiting through a variety of experiential opportunities designed to help all of our members be prepared to achieve academically and to launch successfully after high school.

Many of the youth we serve are navigating poverty, some are homeless, and we support local foster youth and their families by providing consistent and high quality programs that help youth academically, socially, and emotionally year-round.

One of the grants we received has enabled the Club to expand and strengthen our Great by 8th program that provides a real-world learning environment for middle school youth. We provide interesting and enriching programs that help youth build their social emotional skills through programs that make learning realistic and fun with things like budgeting, money handling, running a business, purchasing, and customer service skills.

We have a technical term for our approach here at our Clubhouse, we call it stealth learning! Because we are not school, and most middle school youth are not required by their parent(s) to go to an afterschool program, we must use innovative and creative approaches to get kids engaged and keep them involved at the end of a long school day. The funds we received through the YDD have helped us create a highly successful program that has seen increasing participating over the two years of our project.

We also received support for our high school career exploration and job skills program called Training Teens for Tomorrow (T3). Through this year-round program we are able to take the time with teens to explore and understand how to pursue the various family wage jobs available in the mid-Willamette Valley.

GREAT FUTURES START HERE.



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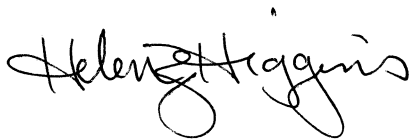
Using YDD funds, we've been able to make progress on our audacious goal of ending generational poverty in Benton County, a community that has the highest income inequality gap in the state!

I ask that the Department of Education continue to provide funding to support out-of-school programs like ours. We know that youth experiencing poverty have the ability to succeed, but often, they just need a little more time to build their skills. They also need access to the unspoken network of opportunity and access that is often taken for granted from their more affluent peers. It really is a combination of what you know and who you know that gives youth that extra boost of support to break the poverty cycle.

The YDD funds help disengaged and marginalized youth in our community have access to a team that is here to help them define and pursue their goals. Your continued investment through the YDD in afterschool programs like ours has a powerful return on investment for all of Oregon. We need all of our youth to graduate and be ready to take a positive next step beyond high school.

Through the grant funding of the YDC, we've had the joy of celebrating the growth in our members' personal confidence that has led them on their journey to discover their talents and passions. Thank you for your continued support of these life changing opportunities for our youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "H" and "G".

Helen Higgins
CEO
Boys & Girls Club of Corvallis