



I am writing in support of SB 531-funding summer and afterschool programs, which are critical to the well-being of youth across our state.

- According to Boys & Girls Club of America data:
 - Kids that are living under the federal poverty line lag 16% behind their peers in school success
 - But-data tells us that kids that come to the club at least 2 days a week are 42% more likely to believe that school is important
 - And kids, particularly teens who come 3+ days a week are 40% more likely to graduate and 55% more likely to go to college!

Two quick stories to illustrate the importance of afterschool and summer program financial support by the legislature:

#1

In late 2023 we opened a new Boys & Girls Club in a high-need/low afterschool asset neighborhood in NE Salem.

We learned through our need's assessment data that within a **1-mile radius** of the planned Club property:

- Nearly 3700 school age kids
 - Over 95% of youth in that 1-mile radius are below the federal poverty line
 - Less than 30% of these kids meet state learning standards for English, language arts and math
 - Over the last 2+ years crime had risen over 21%
- In speaking to the principal of the main elementary feeder school she shared that many of her kids live next door to the soon-to-be Club. She called them her "window watchers" because they hop off the bus at the end of the day and head straight to their apartments-then they watch the world go by thru their windows-no safe place to play and be kids.

Those kids are now coming to the Club next door, participating in high-quality programs that help them build a bigger vision of their future, then give them the tools, resources and opportunities to believe-then achieve that vision for themselves.

#2

- I had an incredible encounter with a mom who reminded me just how vital the Boys & Girls Club is-not just for the kids, but the entire family!
- I had the opportunity to speak to a large firm's employee group about the programs and wrap-around services the Club provides youth. A gal about 34 came up to me and shared how the Club impacted her family's life:
 - Years ago, she was a teen mom
 - Through a turn of events she dropped out of high school, lost her job, then her apartment and found herself and her son living in a friend's wet basement
 - She said she didn't know what to do to get her and her young son's life back together
 - Then she said 'someone told me about the Boys & Girls Club –and our whole world changed'
- She told me she KNEW the Club had saved their lives
- Knowing her son was in a place Every day with caring adults who nurtured his health, wellbeing and supported him academically gave her the space to get her life back together-graduate from high school and get a job
- She was rightfully proud to share she was about to graduate with her bachelor's degree and her son was excelling in high school
 - He planned on going to college and be a success-like his mom
- As we parted ways she thanked me and said, Sue, the club doesn't Just make a difference in a child's life-you are changing/saving the lives of the entire family.

I think we can all agree that this the true ROI and an imperative for all communities-to bring hope and opportunity to our youth to believe in themselves and thrive.