

To: House Committee on Education

Date: March 19, 2025

Subject: In Support of HB 2007

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chair McIntire, Vice-Chair Dobson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lily Yao. I am serving as the 80th Youth Governor of Oregon. As Oregon's 2025 National YMCA Youth Advocate, I recently advocated for the YMCA of the USA's 2025 Legislative Priorities on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. I am reaching out as a young person who has participated in programs at the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club and directly experienced the benefits of summer and afterschool programs for youth.

I would like to share my experience with Oregon YMCA Youth and Government (YAG), a program where students like myself learn about what all of you do every day. YAG is a civic engagement program that empowers high school students to participate in government. We write bills and advocate for them as senators and representatives in a hands-on mock legislature. This February, our conference took place in the Oregon Capitol building, where nearly 100 of us debated on the actual House and Senate floors. You should have seen our excitement! Through YAG, I have learned how the legislative process works, how to respectfully debate with others who hold different views, and gained deep respect for the work you do.

Programs like YAG—including those that span beyond civics education to sports, homework support, arts and crafts, and more—create powerful learning experiences. Perhaps you have children, or perhaps you yourself once benefited from programs like these. These are spaces where meaningful connections form, where small victories happen, and where quiet moments of growth occur that shape who we become.

I strongly support HB 2007 with the -1 amendments because it provides consistent, predictable, and equitable funding for summer and after-school programs. This bill would deliver direct, sustainable funding to community-based organizations and establish high-quality standards that ensure programs boost academic engagement, youth development, and skill-building. These programs meet the unique needs of our diverse communities and help working families when kids need safe, enriching places to be. With your support of HB 2007, programs like YAG, the YMCA, and Boys and Girls Club can continue inspiring the next generation of leaders.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lily Yao