



RE: HB 2007 – Summer Learning

Chair Neron, Vice Chair McIntire, Vice Chair Dobson, and members of the House Education Committee

My name is Sahaan McKelvey and I am the Director of Advocacy & Engagement for Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI). SEI has been providing standard-bearing Summer Programming for 25 plus years. But I would like to speak to HB 2007 as an SEI Parent who has had 3 children experience the life changing impact of the SEI Summer Program.

I am currently Neutral on HB 2007, but I would love to be moved to a position of Support. I do want to acknowledge and appreciate the sponsors of this bill for being willing to listen and respond to feedback, as evidenced by the -1 amendments that have been added. I am looking forward to the release of -2 amendments with the hope that there will be opportunities created to uplift services for historically underserved communities of color. As a parent, I want to speak to any restrictions on CBOs, and any restrictions on funding being used to support participation and family engagement.

Excitement, engagement, and active and comprehensive participation are key staples of effective learning. And these components must be emphasized in a statewide Summer Learning Program if that program is going to maximize impact for our young people. Students who are immersed in highly engaged families and communities are going to experience higher levels of academic success. Students who experience learning in a way that becomes fun for them are going to learn better and learn more. Research is also clear that students are able to experience the peak impact of learning when that learning is facilitated individually. This reality dictates that the more adults we can engage to interact with our students in the teacher role, the better off our students will be as learners. Engaging family and community is of paramount importance to the academic success of students in our state.

I want to share my youngest daughter's experience in the SEI Summer Program. My daughter has struggled with deep anxiety for her entire life. Interacting with groups, or interacting with strangers, terrifies her. She becomes physically ill in these settings. Even speaking in front of her extended family during holidays triggers discomfort and physical anxiety. As an incoming 8th grader, my daughter attended her first SEI Summer Program, and she was not comfortable or confident. I had to walk with her to introduce her to her SEI Coordinator. I had to introduce her to the Department Director and make sure that she knew who the people were that she could go to for support. As the Summer continued, the intentional engagement, the love and support, and the creative learning environment, combined to build her comfort and confidence through that Summer. By the end of the 5-week program, I was thrilled to see *my daughter* participating in choreographed group dances at the SEI Summer Rally in front of hundreds, with a huge smile on her face.



That Summer was a turning point for her. The relationships, the engagement, and the learning went with her into her 8th grade school year. And her ability to succeed academically was 100% impacted by her experience in the Summer Program. She always struggled in school prior to this, but she got 6 A's and 1 B on her 8th grade report card. This was her first time realizing validated academic success. And this was the last B she ever received as she's been a straight A student all through High School and will graduate this year in June of 2025 with a 4.0 High School GPA. This happened because she had an opportunity to be excited about learning while connecting with supportive adults at SEI who could speak into her life because when school is out, SEI is in! This happened because she was able to see the coordinated support between her parents and her SEI Coordinators. This happened because barriers to participation in the SEI Summer and After-School Programs were removed. This happened because SEI was able to impact her in ways that school and district personnel could not.

My daughter's ability to successfully navigate High School would have looked VERY different if she had just attended "Summer School" prior to her 8th grade school year and not the engaging SEI Summer Program.

Please make sure that these life-changing elements of Summer Programming are included in HB 2007.

Thank you!

Sahaan McKelvey