



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1307**  
**Support Youth Development for School-Age Children Act**

The Maryland Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs asks for a **favorable report** on House Bill 1307. Boys & Girls Clubs across the state have been serving youth for over 50 years – providing a safe environment with quality youth development programming, meals, tutoring and additional support.

The mission of Boys & Girls Clubs is “To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.” Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic “those who need us most” has become a larger, more varied population of the state’s youth.

During the last year, Clubs have opened their doors to serve the children of essential workers and to provide a place for youth to participate in virtual school. Clubs have faced steep increases in the cost to serve youth due to the need for PPE, additional staffing, deep cleaning, etc. – and still they have remained a low-cost option for many families.

Initially, Clubs did this with MSDE support in the form of EPSA dollars. At some point, MSDE changed their desire to work with valued community partners to support families and sent cease and desist letters to some Club locations. Staff at the agency have demanded Clubs and other school-aged youth providers become licensed childcares.

Clubs are not childcare facilities; they do not serve infants or toddlers and many of the requirements MSDE seeks to place on them do not apply to the programming being offered or the population being served. For example, MSDE childcare licensure requires training on supporting breastfeeding infants.

At Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) and each affiliate Club, ***safety is our number one priority***. Clubs are required to conduct annual background checks of all staff and volunteers, be compliant with all local safety and fire codes, be trained in reporting of child abuse, have a board-lead safety committee, report any critical incidents, and more.

This bill provides a clear exemption from existing childcare licensure while adding a registration category giving MSDE more information and authority over school-aged youth providers than they have currently.

Clubs across the state look forward to continuing to provide school-aged youth with a safe place to be when schools are closed – whether that is after the final school bell rings or all day during virtual school.

Thank you for your consideration. We urge a **favorable report on House Bill 1307**.