



SB 3 – SUPPORT

January 29, 2020

Dear Chairman Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

The Maryland Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs serves more than 23,000 youth at 42 Club sites across the state. Boys & Girls Clubs aim to provide a high-quality Club experience that assures success is within reach of every young person who enters our doors, with all members on track to graduate from high school and plan for the future, demonstrating good character and citizenship, and living a healthy lifestyle. We aim to provide a safe and positive environment – and a hot, nutritious meal at no cost – for youth after school and during the summer.

The current generation is predicted to have a shorter life span and poorer health than their parents. Nearly 1 in 5 young people are obese¹, while 75% of high schoolers do not get the recommended amount of daily physical activity². Additionally, over 6.5 million children live in food insecure households without consistent access to enough food³. Out-of-school time programs focus on teaching good judgement as the basis for healthy decisions. In addition to providing access to physical activity, for many young people, their last meal of the day is the food they receive at an out-of-school time provider. In 2017, Boys & Girls Clubs across the country served more than 88 million healthy snacks and meals at no cost to members. In addition to providing healthy meals, they also support educational and enrichment programs that keep children learning, engaged and safe.

Youth face a variety of factors that can impede their ability to make good decisions, impacting their physical and mental health. It's vital that youth development staff know how to recognize and refer youth to mental health and substance use services. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 33% of high school students report using alcohol and 22% report using marijuana in the past 30 days⁴.

Additionally, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being. ACEs have been linked to risky health behaviors, chronic health conditions, low life potential and even early death. The Centers for Disease Control underscores the need to prevent the impact of ACEs before they even occur because of their detrimental impact on the health and well-being of young people. Therefore, it is critical to create safe and nurturing relationships and environments to help counteract the consequences of potentially traumatic events. Club's address the social and emotional needs of young people can improve overall well-being and build resilience.

Nationally, between 2017-18, e-cigarette use among high-schoolers jumped 78% (from 11.7% to 20.8%) representing the single biggest jump ever reported for adoption of substance among youth. Children must be exposed to opportunities that promote wellness and social-emotional development, including physical health, healthy eating, active living, trauma-informed care and substance abuse prevention. A strength of local Clubs is to provide health promotion programming.

¹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. *Childhood Obesity Facts*. 2017. <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/childhood.html>

² The Child & Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI). 2016 National Survey of Children's Health. Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health; 2016.

³ Summer Food Service Program, USDA, 2017. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/serving-summer-meals>

⁴ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 2017. *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System*. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>



We strongly support this legislation which would invest more in programs to keep kids away from tobacco and vaping and encourage the committees to look at out-of-school time organizations like ours as partners for these important programs.

BGCA's National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI) is a system built to measure the impact of Clubs using a common set of research-informed indicators of our priority outcomes. Using data from NYOI and comparing it to data from the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey, teens who regularly attend Clubs perform better than their peers as it pertains to abstaining from using tobacco products. Teens abstained at a higher rate compared to their peers - vapor products (BGCA 89% vs. YRBS 87%), cigarettes (BGCA 97% vs. YRBS 92%), chewing tobacco (BGCA 98% vs. YRBS 94%) and cigars (BGCA 97% vs. YRBS 91%).

Club strategies for healthy living and smoking prevention:

- Club programs focus on social-emotional development and build skills for healthy decision-making to positively address the impact of social determinants of health.
- The Mental Health First Aid program through the National Council of Behavioral Health trains Club staff on how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders.
- The SMART Moves (Skills Mastery and Resilience Training) prevention and education program builds social emotional skills that support healthy decision making, such as substance use and sexual risk behaviors. Young people ages 6 to 15 engage in discussion and role-playing, practicing resilience and refusal skills, developing assertiveness, strengthening decision-making skills while analyzing media and peer influence.
- With support from the U.S. Department of Justice-Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Clubs utilize materials from the education program, Positive Action, to provide effective mentoring opportunities for youth. The program engages youth ages 4 to 18 in character development, social-emotional development and academic improvement.
- Club program SMART Girls helps girls from ages 8-18 develop healthy attitudes. It's a small-group health, fitness, prevention/education and self-esteem enhancement program designed to meet the developmental needs of girls in three age groups. Through dynamic sessions, participatory activities, field trips and mentoring opportunities with adult women, Club girls explore their own and societal attitudes and values as they build skills for eating right, staying physically fit, getting good health care and developing positive relationships with peers and adults.

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