



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA**

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Chairman Joseph Heck and distinguished members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding leadership and service. It is an honor to be invited to participate in today's discussion.

I am Teresa Walch. I serve as a National Vice President with Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) is a network of 4,300 club sites that serve 4.3 million young people annually in all 50 states, in large cities and small towns, in public housing and on Native lands, and on U.S. military installations across the globe. More than **58,000** professional staff members operate the Clubs, supported by some **285,000** board and program volunteers.

I have worked in the Boys & Girls Club Movement for over 18 years. I am responsible for leading Boys & Girls Clubs of America's training program and quality improvement strategy with a focus on increasing impact on the young people we serve by focusing on three priority outcome areas – Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles. I also oversee the BGCA legacy leadership and service programs: Torch Club, Keystone and Million Members Million Hours.

Before joining Boys & Girls Clubs, I served as the Finance Director, Army Airforce Exchange Service Europe (AAFES), Juvenile Probations Officer, Department of Defense (DOD) Educator and Schools Officer for the Department of Defense Schools in Europe (DODS).

Volunteer service activities form the very core of vibrant and inclusive communities. Service involves diverse types of volunteerism, ranging from the very informal to the highly structured. It can mean anything from occasionally helping out in a local sports club to providing governance to a national organization. Particularly in a time of change in our country, we must work hard to protect and enhance the spirit of volunteer service participation, and we must see this service as a key to strengthening communities and America. There is no doubt that the government can provide an enabling framework to assist and incentivize service activity. Boys & Girls Clubs of America is committed to building an inclusive environment in which communities and volunteers can play a vital role in strengthening services provided to youth and teens across this country and ultimately making for a stronger America.

Our Mission & Story

For more than a century, Boys & Girls Clubs have helped put young people on the path to great futures. Our mission is to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. We are committed to providing a world-class 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 with a plan for the future, demonstrating good character and citizenship, and living a healthy lifestyle.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America had its beginnings in 1860 with three women in Hartford, Connecticut - Mary Goodwin, Alice Goodwin, and Elizabeth Hammersley. Believing that boys who roamed the streets should have a positive alternative, they organized the first Club. With character development as the cornerstone of the experience, the Club focused on capturing boys' interests, improving their behavior and increasing their expectations and goals. A cause was born due to a commitment of service in a community.

The structure of the Boys & Girls Club Movement is a federated model. More than 1,100 independently and locally governed organizations serve youth in more than 4,300 Club locations.

Boys & Girls Clubs serve small towns, large metropolitan areas, public housing communities, and Native populations. Club programs and services also enrich the lives of youth in public and private schools, as well as those who live on U.S. military installations worldwide. Clubs are community-based, building-centered and led by professional staff. They offer youth development programs, determined by local necessity and available resources, to meet the interests and needs of young people ages 6-18.

Clubs provide a fun, safe and constructive environment for youth and teens during out-of-school hours. They offer programs and services to help young people succeed in school, develop leadership skills, and maintain healthy lifestyles. Boys & Girls Clubs are staffed by more than **58,000** passionate youth development professionals. As caring mentors and program facilitators,

they build ongoing, supportive relationships that foster a sense of belonging and purpose for young people every day.

Commitment to the Youth & Teens of America

For more than 150 years, Boys & Girls Clubs of America has enabled young people most in need to achieve great futures as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Priority programs emphasize Academic Success, Good Character & Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles. In a Harris Survey of alumni, 54 percent said the Club saved their lives.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America's research shows that young people who attend a Club regularly tend to do better than their peers nationally. For instance:

68% of Club 12th graders volunteer at least once per month, while 39% of 12th graders nationally do so.

91% of Club ninth graders report abstaining from alcohol, compared to 77% of ninth graders nationally.

91% of Club ninth graders report abstaining from marijuana use vs. 85% of ninth graders nationally.

27% of Club girls in middle school are physically active each day, compared with 23% of middle-school girls nationally. 42% of Club boys in middle school exercise daily, while 37% of middle-school boys nationally do so.

73% of low-income Club members ages 12 to 17 who attend the Club regularly report receiving mostly As and Bs, compared to 69% of their peers nationally.

12th-grade Club members are more than twice as likely to express an interest in a STEM career as 12th graders nationally (56% of 12th-grade Club members vs. 25% of 12th graders nationally).

Instilling Leadership and Service for Life

Since 1860, the Boys & Girls Club has focused on leadership and service as a way to help young people contribute to their communities in meaningful ways. Youth who are involved with service are more likely as adults to have a strong work ethic, to volunteer and to vote. Engagement in service also fosters the development of greater respect for others and an understanding of citizenship that can carry over into adulthood. By providing opportunities for youth to give back through service, Clubs support young people to develop and demonstrate leadership skills and become productive, caring and responsible adults.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America has three leadership & service programs that focus on building leadership skills through service: Million Members Million Hours, Torch Club and the Keystone Program.

Leadership and Service programs increase members' motivation to become leaders and inspire others; their ability to use leadership skills to create meaningful change; and their confidence in seeing themselves as leaders in their communities and the world.

By providing opportunities for youth to give back through service, Clubs support young people to develop and demonstrate leadership skills and become productive, caring and responsible adults.

Acts of service help youth develop compassion as they learn the value in giving and the importance of kindness. Our 2017 National Outcomes Report tells us:

84 percent of Club members believe they can make a difference in their communities;

92 percent want to help when they see someone in need.

Studies also show that kids involved in civic engagement programs attend school more frequently and are more likely to graduate than their peers who don't participate.

Boys & Girls Clubs focus on two approaches to service:

One-Time Service Experiences: 30-60 minute service activities that take place in a regular Club program day from Martin Luther, King, Jr. Day of Service — to a Club Beautification Project —

Service Learning: Guides youth through a project-based or service-learning approach, engaging youth in a three-step process to discover personal and collective passions, identify and address a community problem or need, and develop a project to activate participation from the community.

Service opportunities within Clubs offer hands-on experiences that demonstrate the power young people have to build a better world. Through one-time service experiences and service learning, youth develop essential leadership skills across three domains:

Self-Leadership: Knowing oneself, and understanding one's emotions to support personal growth and leadership

Key Skills: Self-awareness, self-advocacy

Leadership with Others: Understand the perspectives oneself and others, and communicate effectively to support collaboration

Key Skills: Communication, collaboration with youth and adults, empathy and conflict management

Leadership in the Community: Take positive actions in the community, informed by self-knowledge and effective collaboration

Key Skills: Identify and solve problems, goal setting, and social responsibility

Volunteering with Boys & Girls Clubs

Boys & Girls Clubs rely on community volunteers to provide an array of additional opportunities for members. In 2017, over **349,000** volunteers provided skilled based experiences to members such as musical instruction, art classes, dance, tutoring, counseling, theatre instruction and more. Members are offered opportunities to learn skills that they may not have otherwise been provided without volunteers.

BGCA has historically reached out to other national community-based organizations along with colleges, universities, fraternities, sororities and other youth-serving organizations to expand and enhance Club services.

Mentorship programs in Boys & Girls Clubs build relationships and trust and enable members an opportunity to be heard in a world that can at times be overwhelming. Group mentoring has proven to be effective in the Club environment. It fosters friendships and allows mentees to see that their problems are not unique.

Board volunteer engagement is critical to organizational strength, and boards clearly define the success of the organization and the impact on the community. Strong board volunteers engage in the work of the organization and are viewed as community leaders, with access to resources. Strong board volunteers demonstrate their commitment through their financial support, as well as their support for organizational development and resource development. Over **26,000** community members served in board governance roles in local organizations in 2017.

Partnering with the Federal Government

Boys and Girls Clubs have a long history of partnering with the federal government to help improve the lives of our nation's youth. Without these partnerships, which we leverage with additional support from the private sector, we know Clubs could not reach as many young people as we do today. The programs these partnerships help support not only impact the lives of the youth we serve, they also provide a \$9.60 return on every dollar invested in a Boys & Girls Club.

For example, since 2008, Boys & Girls Clubs and the youth we serve have benefited from grant funding provided by the Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) through the National Youth Mentoring Initiative. As a result, Club mentoring programs in underserved communities have been expanded and enhanced exponentially. More than 9,000 mentors were recruited in 2018 to support DOJ National Youth Mentoring Programs at local Boys & Girls Clubs nationwide. In 2019, BGCA has committed to

promote the service learning benefits of peer mentoring and to expand and enhance peer mentoring programs at Clubs administering DOJ mentoring grants.

Volunteers play a key role in executing mentoring programs in Clubs around the country. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Benton Harbor, Michigan, for example, uses their Office of Juvenile Prevention Youth Mentoring grant to provide opportunities and Club programs to 55 members, with 30 volunteer mentors and staff supporting the youth through the Club's programming. Youth attend the Club a minimum of five hours per week, and the Club is seeing improved grades across participating members. As a result of the mentoring efforts, participating youth are seeing improved success in school and have become more engaged in the Club's Sport, Fitness and Recreation programs, showing a marked change in attendance as well as gang resistance behavior.

The BGCA partnership with the Kiwanis Service Clubs resulted in collaborations with more than 1,000 local Boys & Girls Clubs focused on Kiwanis members serving as mentors at Clubs.

Federal funding Clubs receive through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program helps provide high-quality programming to a diverse group of children grades pre-K to 12th grade in communities nationwide. 21st CCLC programs provide academic enrichment opportunities for children during out-of-school time, including before and after-school and over the summer, offering academic support and enrichment programs, STEM activities, tutoring, and physical activities in local Clubs. This initiative is currently the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to out-of-school time education programs.

Additionally, for over two decades, BGCA and the U.S. Armed Services have partnered to help children of military families face the unique challenges of military life. Today, this enduring partnership continues to provide children of military personnel with critical youth development programs and activities, giving families the vital support they need. In 2017, some **510,000** youth were served at **484** BGCA-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations worldwide.

Children of the approximately 75 percent of military families who live outside installations were also awarded one-year, no-cost Boys & Girls Club memberships. In 2017, **27,734** military youth were served by 1,547 traditional Clubs.

BGCA is committed to leveraging our scale, influence, and partnerships to support military families. That's why we created the Better Together Military Public-Private Partnership (MPPP). The goals of MPPP are to increase outreach and support services to 250,000 military families over the next five years. These youth will be served through community outreach, partnerships and by Clubs in local communities.

Finally, the AmeriCorps VISTA program has supported Clubs across the country, including support in Native communities. Boys & Girls Clubs serve nearly 90,000 Native youth in

approximately 200 Clubs and 26 states, representing nearly 100 different American Indian, Alaska Native, American Samoan, and Native Hawaiian communities. Clubs provide culturally sensitive, targeted programs to help Native youth succeed in school, give back to their communities and commit to their overall health. VISTA members and Summer Associates build the capacity of Native Clubs through a variety of activities including recruitment of volunteer coaches and mentors.

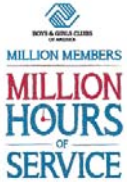
Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the impact of service on youth, teens, and communities. We see the community and volunteer sector as essential partners in economic and social development. Boys & Girls Clubs of America looks forward to continuing the dialogue on legislative changes to expand service across America.

Addendum



For nearly 70 years, the Youth of the Year program has honored and celebrated the nation's most inspiring teens and their incredible journeys. These amazing young people represent the voice and spirit of hope for America. They are inspiring all kids to lead. To succeed. To inspire. One of the components of the Youth of the Year program is service to the community. Since 2015, the Youth of the Year program has provided 524,126 volunteer hours of service resulting in \$3.7M of economic impact using the Point of Light volunteer calculator.



The Million Members, Million Hours of Service (MMMHS) initiative, launched in 2014, is designed to provide every Club member an opportunity to serve in year-round Club and community-based service. Through one-time service experiences and service-learning, youth develop essential leadership skills in three domains: self-leadership, leadership with others, and leadership with the community. Since 2014 BGC member has served over 135,934 volunteer hours resulting in over \$3.4M in economic impact using the Points of Light volunteer calculator.



Torch Club is a small group character and leadership program for youth 10-13. The primary focus of this small group club is service. Service to others, service to Club, service to the community. Each year Torch Club members choose a theme for the upcoming National Project. Since 2013, Torch Club members have engaged in 290,560 volunteer hours resulting in \$7.2M in economic impact using the Points of Light volunteer calculator.



For over 50 years the Keystone Program has focused on leadership for members ages 14-18. Teens gain valuable leadership and service experience within the Keystone program. Since 2013, Keystone members have engaged in 264,643 volunteer hours resulting in \$6.5M in economic impact using the Points of Light Volunteer calculator.