



PA House of Representatives
Republican Policy Committee

414, Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120
(717) 260-6144

Rep. Joshua D. Kail
Chairman

PA House Republican Policy Committee Hearing

“Funding Our Children’s Future”

December 7, 2023, at 2 p.m.

**Bishop Canevin High School
2700 Morange Rd.
Pittsburgh, PA 15205**

2:00 p.m. Welcome and Pledge of Allegiance

2:05 p.m. Welcome from Michael Joyce
Principal, Bishop Canevin High School

Programs Panel

2:10 p.m. Chris Watts
President and CEO, Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania

2:15 p.m. Questions for the Programs Panel

Parents Panel

2:45 p.m. Ruth Alicea
Parent at Leadership Christian Academy

2:50 p.m. Cassie Smith
Parent at Calvary Baptist Academy

2:55 p.m. Questions for the Parents Panel

3:25 p.m. Closing Comments

Written testimony submitted by:

Cherie Moyer, Parent at Bishop Canevin High School



Testifier Biographies

PA House of Representatives Policy Committee Hearing *"Funding Our Children's Future"*



Chris Watts

President and CEO, Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania

Chris Watts is the President & CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania, a leader in early learning, youth programming and workforce development that serves thousands of children across the region.

Most recently, Chris was the Vice President of District Development for the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP), where he was responsible for advancing investments and projects that improve the quality of life in Downtown Pittsburgh. Prior to joining the PDP, Chris was appointed Executive Director of the congressionally chartered National Fitness Foundation, where he developed a unique public-private model and pioneered new strategies that delivered millions of dollars to schools across the country to address childhood health & fitness. Previously, Chris built the social enterprise 4POINT4, an innovative sportswear company that donates proceeds to charity.

From 2010 to 2014 Chris served in the Obama Administration, where he led corporate and community partnerships for the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition in support of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Initiative.

Prior to graduate school, Chris began his career as a sustainability & transportation engineering analyst at Kimley Horn. A proud Pittsburgh native with an engineering degree from Carnegie Mellon University, Chris earned an MBA from George Washington University and is engaged in local community development as an active board member of Strip District Neighbors, Walk Bike Shaler, and Never Fear Being Different (NFBF).

Ruth Alicea

Parent at Leadership Christian Academy

A mother of two and a former Pennsylvania National Guard member, Ruth's daughter has experienced significant personal and academic development since attending Leadership Christian Academy, an opportunity made possible through OSTC funds.

Cassie Smith

Parent at Calvary Baptist Academy

As a mother of three, Cassie has expressed the vital role that educational scholarship programs have played in securing the opportunity for her children to attend Calvary Baptist Academy.



**Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania
Testimony to EITC Policy Committee
December 7, 2023**

Good afternoon my name is Christopher Watts and I have had the privilege and responsibility to serve as the President & CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania since November 2022.

Thank you for the invitation to share testimony on how organizations like the Boys & Girls Clubs rely on funding streams like EITC to deliver our mission.

For 135 years, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania has worked to advance the potential of youth and teens throughout the Pittsburgh region, now serving more than 5,000 youth and families across 17 locations. We are a safe place for kids to prepare for careers and life, with programs including preschool, before/after school, summer camp, teen mentoring, workforce development, STEAM, and sports.

Our core values of safety, fun, and inclusion enable us to accelerate progress towards our priority outcomes for youth of Academic Success, Character & Leadership, and Healthy Lifestyles. These outcomes advance our members Career & Life Readiness so all Club Kids are prepared to graduate with a plan for the future as productive, caring, and responsible citizens. The data proves our results as 97% of Club Teens expect to graduate from High School and 80% have submitted an application to post-secondary education, which both exceed national averages.

Although our mission is to activate and advance the potential in *every child*, we recognize that what we do makes the most difference to those that need us most. Per our latest annual report, 70% of the youth we serve identify as Black Indigenous People of Color, 65% reside in single-parent households, and 70% receive free and reduced-priced lunch.

In order to provide our critical programs, we need to have a dynamic mix of funding streams, as our ability to remain resilient and sustainable in uncertain economic times is what our staff, kids, families, and communities expect. Our current revenue is a diverse collection of income spanning various sources, including government, private foundations, corporations, and individuals that contribute through a variety of ways.

We rely heavily from public sector support, particularly from Allegheny County Department's of Human Services and Children Initiatives as well as State agencies such as Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency , PennSERV, and Early Learning Research Center. This funding is absolutely essential, but unfortunately does not cover the significant resources necessary to run high quality programming and maintain physical infrastructure while attracting and retaining top talent in an increasingly competitive environment.

EITC is a meaningful way to incentivize contributions that support our organizations ability to offer more educational opportunities to children and families. Over the past three years, EITC contributions to us exceeded \$250,000, with over \$140,000 this last fiscal year, which was 2% of our annual budget.

We utilize these contributions as an Educational Improvement Organization or EIO to specifically support our Out of School time Programs in preschool K-8 afterschool and summer camp, STEM, and teen workforce development programming at locations in the City of Pittsburgh, Carnegie, Millvale, McKees Rocks, Duquesne, McKeesport, and Somerset.

For out of school time, this funding supports enrollment and retention of youth and families in our licensed preschool K-8 afterschool and summer camp programs by providing scholarships for those that qualify. I am proud to share that four of our locations have reached STAR 4 status in the state's quality rating improvement system, which is the gold standard in youth development, and the remaining locations are on track to achieve that within the next year. Any funding we receive for these programs allows us to provide the highest quality programming to families at a much more affordable cost, as the actual cost of care can exceed \$250/child per week.

We have also been able to leverage EITC funds to support our STEM programs, specifically the Artificial Intelligence Pathways Institute, which connects students in grades nine through 11 who have a passion for technology and who are traditionally underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics related fields. The students learn the fundamentals of AI with the mentorship of trained instructors and industry professionals, developing projects to help solve real-world problems using artificial intelligence concepts and programming.

Additionally, EITC supports our award winning Career Works programming. In the Pittsburgh area, which is experiencing growth in technology, artificial intelligence, robotics, medicine, financial services, and more, it is critical that we link youth with opportunities, experiences, and skills needed for future professional success in these rapidly expanding fields. Our Career Works Programming serves hundreds of youth each year and provides them with career coaching, internships, job

shadowing, occupational skill building, power skill development, and a formalized plan for their future.

Without EITC contributions, our capacity to continue to provide these quality programs will be reduced significantly and the lives and futures of hundreds of youth will be impacted.

A current challenge with EITC is the uncertainty of timing as relates to distribution of the funds. A specific example is that one of our largest corporate partners has committed a \$100,000 contribution to us earlier this year, and we are still waiting for the allocation which is subjected to when the state issues its approval.

We see EITC as a growing revenue stream for us and have had productive conversations with many potential corporate partners who are going to consider this method of giving based on the additional tax incentives it provides them.

In closing, I want to respectfully request on behalf of the many Boys & Girls Clubs across the Commonwealth as well as our peer out of school time organizations, that the legislature continues supporting increased funding to EITC, specifically for the Educational Improvement Organization line item.

I appreciate your time and consideration as a former Club Kid who currently has children in the programs, I always enjoy sharing details of the important work of the Boys & Girls Clubs.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

For KIDS

135 years

EITC Testimony
12.7.23



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Introductions

Christopher Watts
President & CEO

Boys & Girls of
Western Pennsylvania





135 Years in the Making

Every kid no matter what.

Since 1888, we've been serving the Pittsburgh region. Our commitment is to ensure our kids have opportunities to reach their full potential.

BGCWPA is one of the largest out-of-school-time providers in the region. Every year we serve more than 5,000 kids from Allegheny County and Somerset County and soon Westmoreland and Fayette County.

We currently operate programs in 17 locations. Including 5 Clubhouses, 3 School-Based Clubhouses and 2 Teen Centers that include preschool, before/after school, summer camp, teen mentoring, workforce development, STEAM, and sports programs.

We need to reach more. It is our mission to activate and advance the potential of every child, and to do that, we are committed to reducing barriers and expanding services to offer experiences for students from preschool to post graduate. Our approach is focused on delivering a safe, fun, and inclusive environment that sets kids up for success today...and for life.

We are for kids.

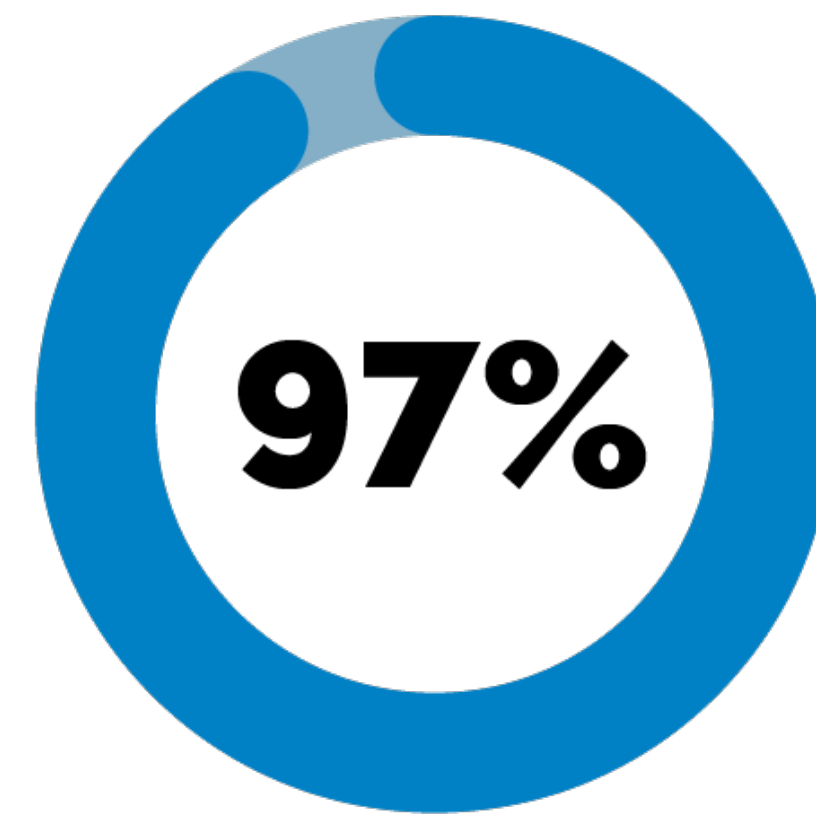


Our responsibility is to respond to the need. That's what we've always done for our kids, for our communities. That's what we will continue to do every day.

Chris Watts
President & CEO
BGCWPA



Our impact is *real*.
It Works because we do the work.



of Club Teens
expect to
graduate from
High School.



have submitted an
application to post-
secondary education.



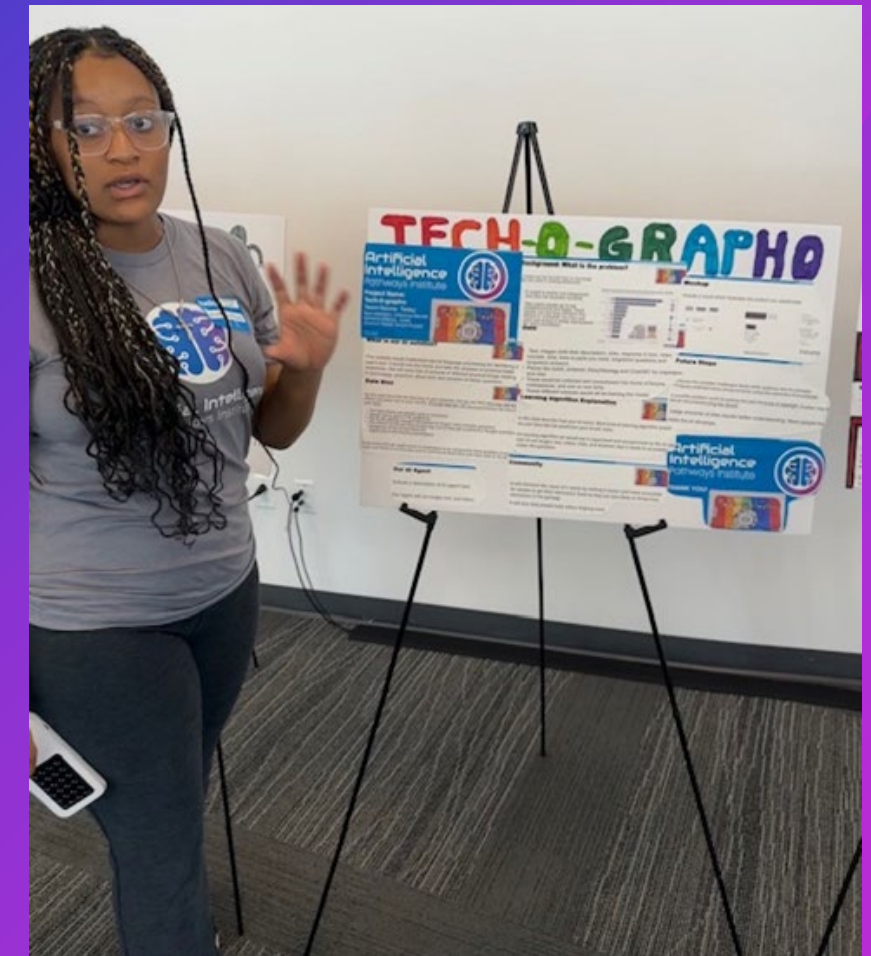
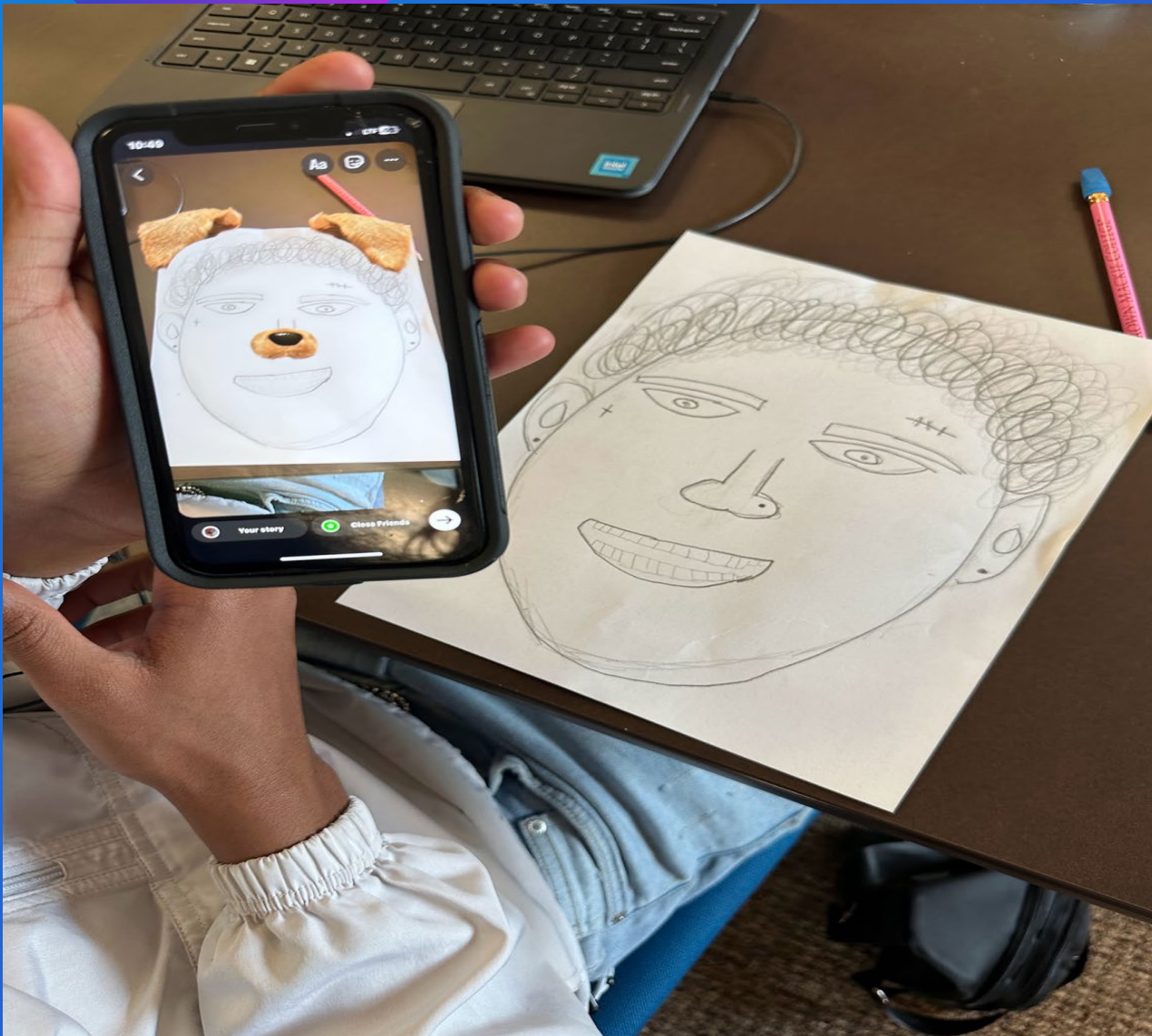
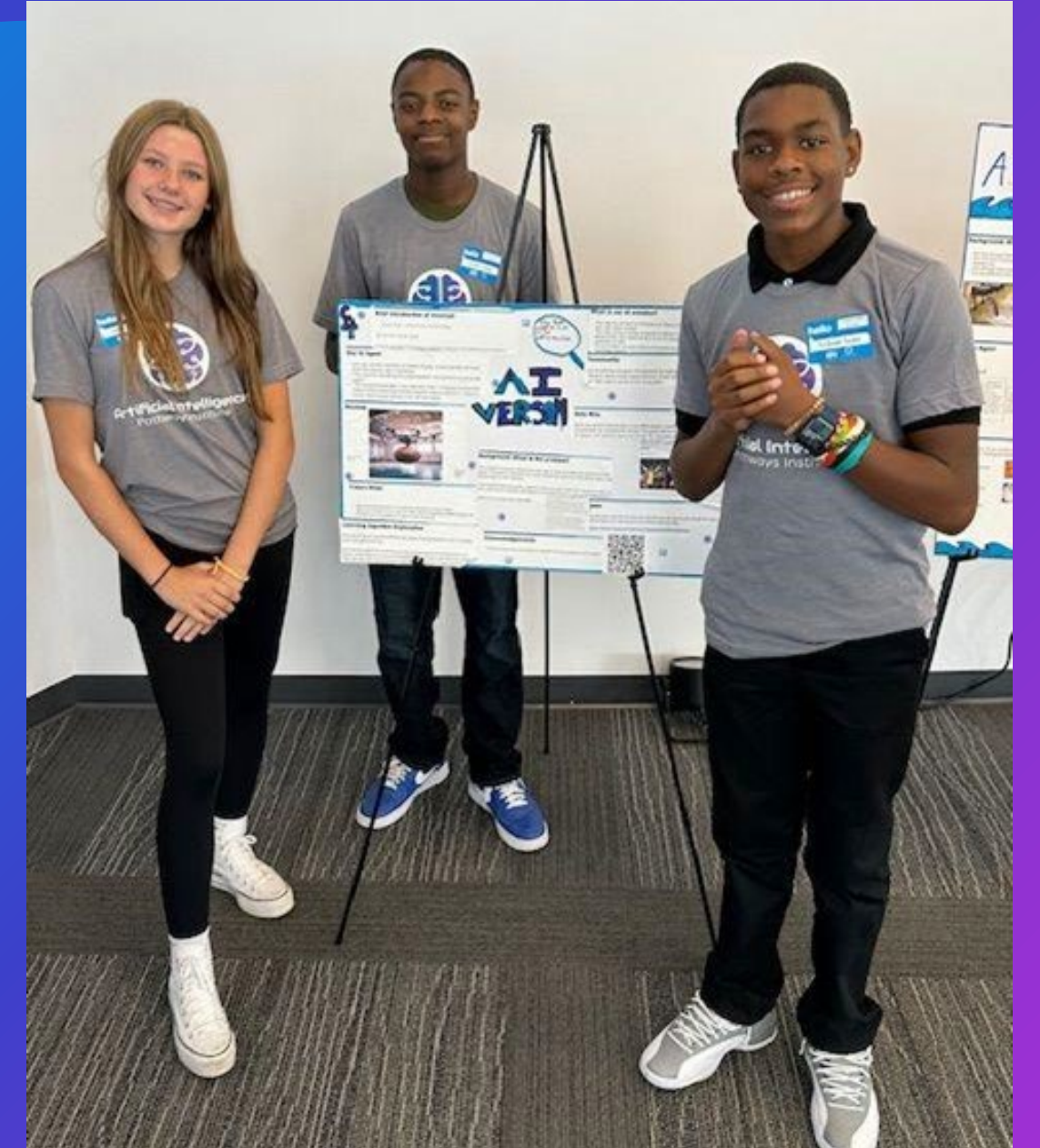
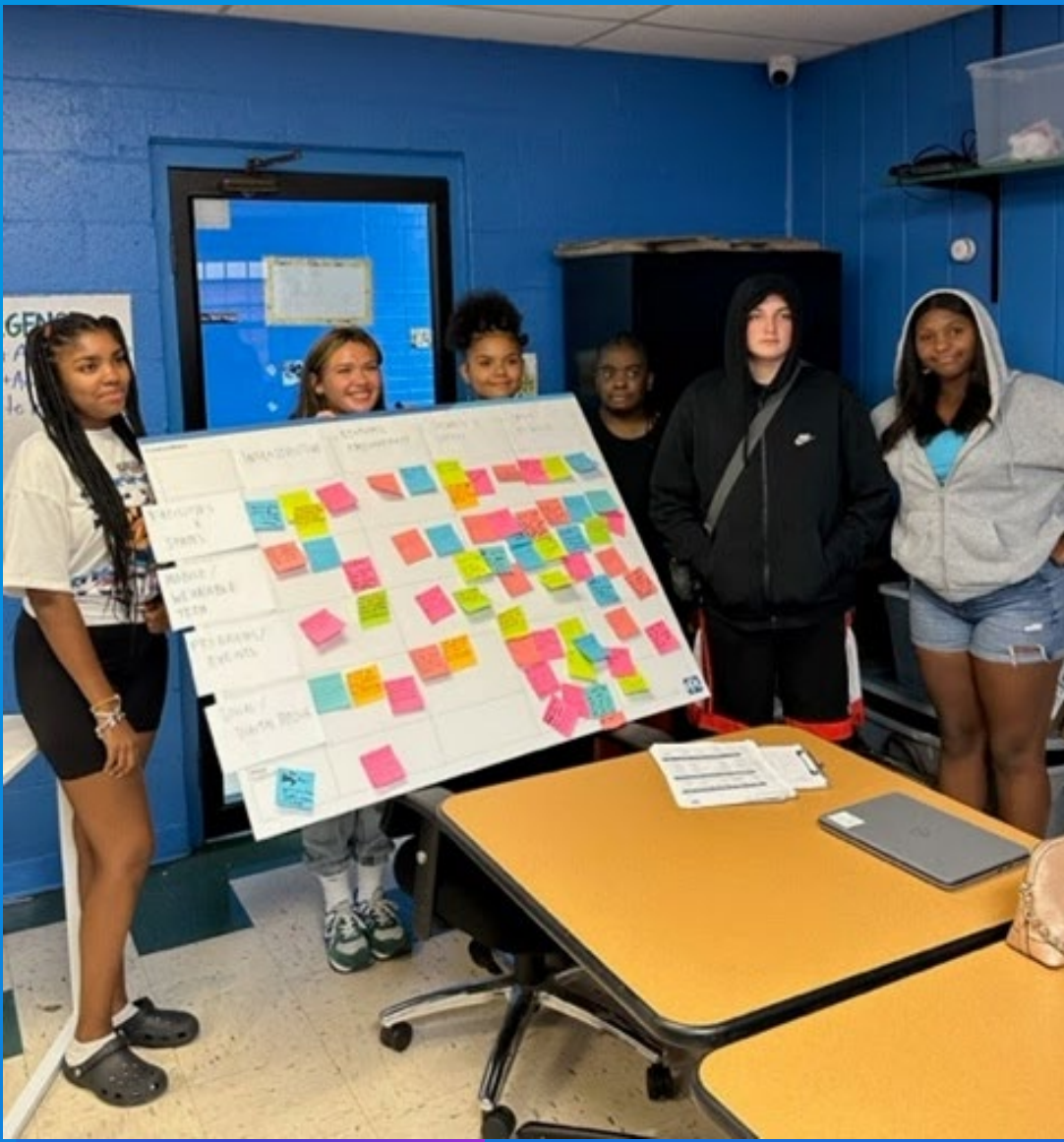
Out of School Time Programs

Increasing Access to
Highest Quality Programs

- Preschool
- After School
- Summer Camp



Artificial Intelligence Pathways Institute



Career Works

Preparing for Life

- Mentoring
- Internships
- Skill Development



Thank you.



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Republican Policy Committee Hearing
PA State House of Representatives
Ruth Alicea Testimony
12/07/2023

Good afternoon everyone I would like to thank you for your past and future help and for your time today. My name is Ruth Alicea. I am a 46 year old mother of 2. A nine year old boy Maximus that is in an autism support class in a public school and a 11 year old girl Jocelyn who is a student at Leadership Christian Academy. I am the youngest child of 8. Some of us have attended public school and some private school. All 8 of us are strong and independent people that add to our communities. I attended a private Christian school as a child and then a public school as a high schooler. I was in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard for 6 years. I have been to Europe with the National Guard and was put on active duty quickly after 9/11 for Enduring Freedom. I was fortunate not to have to be on active duty too long and never had to leave the states. I got married in 2011 and after some emotional and physical abuse, moved my children in with my mother and got divorced. To help with the cost of raising children I still live with my 81 year old mother. The reason all of this is important information to share is that without the help of this OSTC funding my daughter would have to attend public school. One thing we all agree on whether you have children of your own or not, is that no 2 children are the same. So to think they can all be educated the same way is just silly. I believe that since they are literally our future they should learn in a way that best suits the child. As I stated before my son goes to a public school and as with anything there are things that I disapprove of. He is in a class with 8 other children so his environment is different than a typical public school kid. He however has had 3 different teachers since the start of this year. I also have a sister that has been a teacher for Erie public school for almost 20 years. And a niece that is an assistant principal. I see value in all education. That being said I have 2 children that require 2 totally different ways of learning.

If Jocelyn where to attend public school she would be at Perry Elementary. Perry has been a low achieving school for years. In fact most Erie schools are low-achieving. The classes have 20 or more students in them. Jocelyn would be lost in that environment. We live by the public high school, Erie High, where there has been multiple fights in front of our house, and the police are around almost every school day. In fear she has asked me if she will have to go to that school when she is in 9th grade. I have assured her she will not. She is 11 and as we wait for the bus by our house she doesn't understand why the high school kids talk to each other the way they do and why they are mean to each other. I realize high school is not the same as elementary but my sons school has metal detectors. It's an elementary school! She would not feel safe in the academic environment. That would be distracting to her and she would not thrive in that setting. Jocelyn would also have an IEP (individual education plan) if she went to public school due to some extra needs she has. LCA has accommodated her even though they are not required to.

Due to her past home life Jocelyn has some anxiety issues and some emotional issues to work through. Because of the small class size and the more one on one time the staff at LCA was able to see her need for counseling which she received and the fact that she is dyslexic. There is a dyslexia tutor on staff at LCA and she has been given lots of tools to help her move forward with her emotional issues and her school work. She is now in her 6th year at LCA and is truly coming out of her shell. She feels safe at school and knows all the teachers and support staff. She is in an educational environment that allows for growth academically and emotionally through teacher support and peer learning.

This scholarship helps someone like me by taking off the pressure to work multiple jobs to try to put my daughter in a private school because she needs the smaller, quieter and safer atmosphere. Without it I would be home less and we all know that a home that has an absent parent does not make for strong well balanced adults. But instead you have allowed 2 children to thrive in 2 different schools and 2 different environments, neither of which is wrong. By helping us it does not just help Jocelyn it truly helps our whole family. So now my children will grow and thrive and will be future world changers. Thank you so much

December 5, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Cherie Moyer, and my daughter, Isabella, is a junior at Bishop Canevin High School. She follows in the footsteps of her older sister Elizabeth, a 2015 BC graduate, and her older brother Jonathan, a 2020 BC graduate. My husband and I, along with our children, have been proud members of the Bishop Canevin family since 2011.

My husband and I are hard-working people with a modest income, and we have relied heavily on financial aid to make Catholic education possible for our children. In particular, EITC funding has covered a significant portion of our children's tuition, as shown below:

- From 2011-2015, 28% of Elizabeth's tuition was paid with EITC and OSTC funding.
- From 2016-2020, 12% of Jonathan's tuition was paid with EITC funding.
- From 2021-2023, 28% of Isabella's tuition was paid with EITC funding.

Our family resides in a city where the public school district has often been classified as failing. The opportunity to send our kids to Bishop Canevin, where they could receive a top-notch, college-preparatory education, intertwining faith with academics, has been invaluable to us. For our older two, this strong foundation has paved the way to academic success in college as well. Elizabeth graduated Cum Laude from Robert Morris University in 2019, and Jonathan is currently a senior at Bucknell University, where he consistently makes the Dean's List.

Simply stated, without EITC, a Bishop Canevin education would not be possible for us. Without EITC, my kids would have attended a public school with subpar academics. Without EITC, my kids would not be where they are today. Words cannot express how truly grateful I am for every single cent my family has received.

With costs skyrocketing all around us and Catholic school enrollment declining, the future of Catholic education depends on programs such as EITC and OSTC. These programs have opened so many doors for so many families, including my own.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my unwavering support of these valuable programs.

Sincerely,

Cherie Moyer