WHEREAS, Out of School Time (OST) programs are a critical service for youth, families, and communities throughout Illinois; this was evident during 2020, the first year of the pandemic, when OST programs offered emergency services for children of frontline workers, provided tens of thousands of meals for children and their families, supported youths' social and emotional needs, and served as virtual learning sites in partnership with schools; these programs were often the safest place, both physically and emotionally, for numerous school age youth to spend their day; and

WHEREAS, Each year, regardless of a pandemic, Out of School Time programs benefit communities throughout Illinois by:

(1) Being a critical part in violence prevention in communities by actively engaging youth in supportive environments; afterschool programs also provide a safe haven and help dissuade youth from engaging in risky behaviors on and offline; studies have found that participants in afterschool programs are 30% less likely to participate in criminal activities;

(2) Supporting their participants social and emotional learning (SEL), as well as fostering character development; according to the Afterschool Alliance,
"Afterschool and summer learning programs are a unique setting where youth can connect to positive adult mentors, feel safe to try new things, and have the opportunity to acquire new skills and develop mastery in an area."; compared to control students, students participating in SEL programs showed significantly more positive outcomes with respect to enhanced SEL skills, attitudes, positive social behavior, and academic performance and significantly lower levels of conduct problems and emotional distress;

(3) Partnering in education with schools; OST programs offer educational support during the school year and lessen learning loss during the summer; regarding the COVID pandemic, OST programs are critical to learning recovery; studies show that afterschool programs are sparking students' interest in school, leading to better school attendance, grades, standardized test scores, and behavior; OST programs also support academic outcomes by providing STEM activities, mentoring programs, career exploration, arts enrichment, and physical activity;

(4) Allowing parents, guardians, or caregivers to go to work or attend school knowing their children are safe and receiving quality programming, with 82% of parents agreeing that their afterschool program provides peace of mind and helps them keep their job; working families and businesses also benefit from afterschool programs that
ensure that youth have a safe place to go while parents or guardians are at work; parents and guardians who do not have access to childcare miss an average of eight days of work per year, and this decreased worker productivity costs businesses up to $300 billion annually; and

(5) Ensuring nutrition for youth through healthy after school snacks and, in many cases, evening meals; 96% of afterschool programs in Illinois offer at least a snack in their programs, while a quarter offer either breakfast, lunch, or dinner; many OST programs are USDA meal sites with over 28,056,694 meals and snacks being served to Illinois youth in these programs from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021; and be it further

WHEREAS, The need for more Out of School Time programs is great in Illinois, with four children waiting to access an afterschool program for every one child currently enrolled; additionally, nearly 430,000 youth who are not enrolled in a summer program say they would be if one was available to them; not only will Out of School Time programs cause a noticeable change in areas of need in our State, but they will also save money in the long-term; by increasing kids' earning potential, improving academic achievement, and reducing juvenile crime and delinquency, afterschool/OST programs save up to $9 for every $1 invested; therefore, be it
RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we support Out of School Time
programs in Illinois and recognize that they serve as a key
component to supporting violence prevention, academic
achievement, social/emotional well-being, nutritional needs,
and a strong workforce, and we further recognize these
programs' importance in a continuum of care for youth from
birth to adulthood.