



2017-2018 OHIO ALLIANCE OF YMCAS PRIORITIES

BETH TSVETKOFF, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

40 WEST LONG ST, COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215

www.ohioymcas.org

At the YMCA, we're for healthy living, youth development, and social responsibility. Ohio YMCAs are in 163 diverse communities around the state, and serve 1.6 million Ohioans, both children and adults.

Did you know we are the largest early and out of school-time learning provider in the state?

Did you know Ohio YMCAs reach the most pre-diabetic Ohioans with the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program, which is the CDC-recognized evidence-based diabetes prevention program?

And that we teach more kids how to swim than any other institution, which are lessons in safety, healthy living, and self-confidence?

Our Young and School Age Kids Need Increased Investment to Thrive

Ohio YMCAs provide children under age six with critical, quality early learning and school age kids with safe, dependable places to grow before and after school. YMCA day camp programs also help prevent learning loss during the summer. Effective use of our state and federal dollars is necessary to ensure Kindergarten readiness and school age reading proficiency. Thousands of working parents, and their employers, rely on early education and school age programs to teach our kids and support Ohio's workforce.

Preventing and Helping Treat Chronic Disease is Healthy Living

The YMCA has long been an organization dedicated to improving the health of our communities. As part of this commitment to improving care and lowering cost, YMCAs embraced evidence-based chronic disease prevention programs like the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program. Ohio Ys also began offering Enhance®Fitness, which is an evidence-based wellness program for older adults, and LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA for cancer survivors.

Additionally, YMCA of the USA and Ohio Ys are working to build capacity for additional chronic disease programs for our communities, such as blood pressure management, Moving for Better Balance, diabetes self-management, childhood obesity, and brain health.

Pioneering Healthier Communities Ohio Works to Improve Community Health

Pioneering Healthier Communities Ohio (PHC Ohio) works to create fair opportunities for children to access healthy food and physical activity. Our national YMCA movement is adopting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards in Y child care centers, which includes requirements around healthy beverages and food, physical activity, and screen time. Ohio's Step Up to Quality system should recognize centers that achieve these or similar standards.

Our communities' built environments are related directly to our communities' health. Investing in Safe Routes to School and Complete Streets, which allow children and families the ability to walk and bike to school and throughout their communities, not only promote health and reduces healthcare expenses, but also attract businesses and employees to Ohio cities and towns.

Teaching Democracy to Each Generation is Youth Development

Ohio YMCA Youth & Government helps our students better understand the democratic process, both by training for and participating in a statewide conference at the Ohio Statehouse. Youth & Government has been in Ohio for over 50 years, but had stopped growing. With changes instituted by Ohio Ys, more Ohio students are participating in YG than ever before in Ohio's history! In 2017 and 2018, Youth & Government will have over 900 students each year.

PRIORITY ISSUES

If you would like a more detailed explanation of our priorities, or have any questions or concerns, please contact Beth Tsvetkoff at the Ohio Alliance of YMCAs at 614-384-2300 or btsvetkoff@ohioymcas.org.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Teaching and caring for our young and school age kids

The YMCAs are the largest early childhood and school age care providers in Ohio, and helping children develop educationally and socially is a critical part of the YMCA mission. In these programs, we serve kids from six weeks to age thirteen.

Y early childhood programs are early learning for children as young as six weeks, and no longer “babysitting.” YMCAs’ school age programs are not just a place where kids socialize out of school. At the Y, school age children continue their education after school in safe, stimulating environments. We also reduce summer learning loss through quality summer camp programs.

Investment in quality child care leads to Kindergarten readiness, increased 3rd grade reading proficiency, better graduation rates, reduced need for intervention, less involvement with the juvenile justice system, and a ready workforce for the future.

However, in September 2016, approximately only 18,000 of 116,000, or 15%, of children in publicly-funded child care are served in high quality programs. We must enable more early learning and school age providers to move into high-quality, ensuring all of our vulnerable children are receiving the education and support they need to thrive.

Our programs also are a stable source for nutritious meals for kids in our care. Ohio YMCAs provide thousands of meals each day through the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which often is difficult to administer. While our goal is to feed our kids, the program’s burdensome restrictions prevent Ys from reaching that goal.

Our kids need high-quality early learning and school age care

In Ohio, early learning and school age care for low income families is funded through a combination of Child Care Development Block Grant (“CCDBG”), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (“TANF”) dollars, and state general funds. These resources should give all kids access to quality child care, including low-income children who use their subsidies for YMCA child care programs.

The federal recommendation for reimbursement for quality early learning and school age programs is the 75th percentile. Ohio’s child care programs have been reimbursed well under that recommendation

(on average between the 20th and 40th percentile) for years. Our early learning and school age care cannot continue without a stable financial and policy foundation. With continued instability, high-need communities will lose early learning and school age programs.

To serve all children in high quality early learning and school age settings, we recommend the following:

1. Use current investments in early learning and school age more effectively.

During 2017 and 2018, the state must use its technical assistance dollars to help move as many early learning providers from being unrated to achieving one star. At the end of 2018, any early learning providers not yet star-rated should experience a 15% reduction in public funding.

The savings that result from moving early learning programs to one star should be reinvested in reimbursement rates for two, three, four, and five-star programs.

2. Define early and school age care based on the quality provided.

Outside of a Step Up to Quality rating, all child care is identically defined. In order to foster higher quality programs and allow parents to make better-informed decisions about care for their children, the state should define the difference between custodial care, emerging quality, and high quality early education and school age care.

The state should use these different categories to drive decision making on funding and policy, such as child care licensing. Additionally, our current payment system is outdated because it is based solely upon the work support functions custodial care provides. The payment system for emerging and high quality care must reflect educational and work support functions that care provides.

We also ask for the state’s and legislature’s support in utilizing the Common Sense Initiative to lead a process to revolutionize the vast rules and regulatory agencies entangled in early learning and school age care. The rules that regulate that education and care should address each category of care separately. Custodial care regulation should continue to revolve around health and safety only, while emerging and high quality programs should be measured against outcome and evidence-based methods.

3. Ensure that Step Up to Quality rewards high quality behavior and enables all providers to rise to high star levels.

The current Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) rating system was created around early learning programs, which leaves school age care unable to navigate the high star ratings. For example, our YMCA school age programs focus on homework support during the school year, preventing learning loss during the summer, physical activity, and healthy eating. The current three, four, and five-star SUTQ ratings do not account for these primary services school age care provides.

With school age care being one third of the child care budget, and educational success critical for school age children, we cannot ignore school age child care programs. The state must re-evaluate SUTQ for school age programs.

The YMCA movement nationally is implementing YMCA Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards for both early learning and school age care. These HEPA standards require Y child care centers to adopt healthy eating and active living policies, including changes for both staff and children. Providers should be able to gain points for higher star ratings by making these sorts of high quality improvements.

Providing healthy meals to kids in our care is critical to their learning and development

Ohio YMCAs provide over 7000 meals per day to children and youth in our early learning and school age programs. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federally-funded United States Department of Agriculture program administered by the Ohio Department of Education. CACFP enables child care centers to provide nutritious meals and snacks as a regular part of their care and that contribute to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of kids in need.

Unfortunately, some of the rules around utilizing CACFP make providing those critical meals very difficult. Some rules come from USDA, and others from ODE. For example, very detailed schedule requirements must be kept concerning when meals and snacks may be served. Those requirements often run counter to our parents’ work schedules and older youths’ attendance habits. Thus, at times, some kids are left without a meal.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (CONTINUED)

We ask that the goal of the CACFP program, which is to provide meals to children in need, be the first consideration in any rules the state creates.

Youth & Government is meaningful youth development

Youth development is a central pillar to the YMCA mission, and YMCA Youth & Government is a critical piece of that pillar. Youth & Government (YG) is a three-day learning conference in which students participate directly in a simulation of the democratic process. YG offers students the opportunity to learn about a wide variety of issues, develop critical thinking skills, and articulate their beliefs while engaging constructively with those who hold like and opposing views.

YG includes all three branches of government, as well as the Press Corp. In the legislative program, student representatives and senators elect their leadership, research current events, and write bills throughout the year. For these legislators, the mock legislative experience culminates by debating their bills on the Ohio House and Ohio Senate floors and seeking signature. Students also can participate as lobbyists and pages.

The executive branch of YG includes a race each year for Youth Governor. Candidates create platforms and advocate their qualifications during the gubernatorial debate and through "grassroots" campaigning. Once elected, the Youth Governor becomes the leader and face of

the program. The Youth Governor hand-selects his or her student cabinet who seek the passage or failure of bills based on the Youth Governor's platform.

In the judicial program, student justices preside over a Youth Supreme Court. Student attorneys prepare briefs for the Court, as well as present oral arguments. The student justices, then, deliberate and issue their opinion.

In 2017 and 2018, we will have over 900 students each year participate in our Statehouse conferences. We continue to break our record for the number of students who love participating in YG!

HEALTHY LIVING

We help Ohioans prevent and manage chronic disease

YMCAs are close to their communities and trusted partners. They are perfectly situated to improve health outcomes of Ohio communities, which will improve Ohioan's health and reduce health-care spending.

Our evidence-based programs improve health and well-being and prevent chronic diseases, which are a leading cause of spending in Ohio. The YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program, Enhance®Fitness, and LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA control costs and improve outcomes.

YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program

For Ohioans at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes, the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program can help pre-diabetics adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles that will reduce the chance of developing type 2 diabetes. This program is an important piece of Ohio's new state health improvement plan, and we ask the state to support our YMCAs as we continue to expand this life-changing program. Ohio YMCAs already offer the program in over 100 communities, and continue to grow each month.

The program is based on research funded by the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which showed that by eating healthier, increasing physical activity, and losing a small amount of weight, a person with pre-diabetes can prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes by 58%.

In a classroom setting, a trained lifestyle coach helps participants change their lifestyle by learning about healthy eating, physical activity, and other behavior changes over the course of 16 one-hour sessions. After the initial 16 core sessions, participants meet monthly for added support to help maintain progress. The program's goals are to reduce body weight by 5% and increase physical activity to 150 minutes per week.

The Office of the Actuary at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services found that the program saved \$2650 per person in health care spending. Additionally, an independent study by the United Health Foundation shows the Ys are meeting the program's goals.

Enhance®Fitness

Across Ohio, a growing number of Y associations offer EnhanceFitness, an evidence-based group exercise program for older adults that uses simple, easy-to-learn movements that motivate individuals (particularly those with arthritis) to stay active throughout their life.

Our participants have noticed more energy, better balance, increases in upper body and lower body strength, more flexibility and range of motion, better sleep, more feelings of happiness, and a sense of independence.

In addition to the physical benefits, research has shown that, among older adults who participate in EnhanceFitness, health costs

were lowered each year by \$945. (Report to Congress: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Evaluation of Community-Based Wellness and Prevention Programs Under Section 4202(b) of the Affordable Care Act)

LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA

At the Y, we believe in freely providing the gift of hope to the people in our community who are experiencing cancer. LIVESTRONG at the YMCA allows cancer survivors with the opportunity to come to the Y to heal. We believe in partnering with people experiencing cancer to create a safe, loving, and caring environment.

At no cost, cancer survivors will have the opportunity twice each week to engage in a proven physical activity program under the guidance of qualified instructors trained in the program's curriculum. Each survivor and their family also will be provided a membership to the Y during the 12-week program.

The Yale Cancer Center and Dana Farber Cancer Institute recently studied LIVESTRONG at the YMCA. After a cancer diagnosis, a patient's quality of life decreases significantly. The Yale and Farber study shows that exercise can improve patients' quality of life in a myriad of ways. (<http://news.yale.edu/2015/05/28/exercise-offers-cancer-survivors-significant-improvements-quality-life>)

HEALTHY LIVING (CONTINUED)

We teach kids how to swim, be healthy, and be self-confident

At the Y, we don't just have swimming pools. We teach safety, support healthy bodies, and give children lifelong confidence by teaching them how to swim. We also encourage a child's parents to learn to swim, and by doing so we can help keep the whole family safe in the water.

Housing the largest amount of swimming pools of any place in Ohio, YMCAs recognize the importance of keeping kids and adults safe in pools, spas, and spray grounds. Yet, as nonprofits, we ask to find a balance between regulation, cost, and flexibility.

Everyday we ensure our pools are safe for our community, but the cost of over-

regulation severely strains our budget, thus hampering our mission of healthy living. We need the flexibility in statute and rule to provide the utmost safety yet continue our work.

We ask policymakers to find this workable balance.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Our nonprofit services should not be subject to sales tax

As part of the YMCA's commitment to healthy living, youth development, and social responsibility, we support all efforts to remove barriers to lifelong health and wellness. Ohio is one of only five states that tax nonprofit fitness memberships. YMCAs are nonprofit, tax exempt organizations. Like nonprofit hospitals, YMCAs provide immense community benefit:

- In 2015, YMCAs contributed over \$23 million in financial assistance to those who could not afford memberships.
- Over 29,000 volunteers donated over \$2.8 million worth of time.

YMCAs are not taxed on other programs and services, such as summer camp and fitness classes. Only memberships.

The dollars YMCAs collect from members and remit for sales tax could be used to provide more financial assistance to those who cannot afford to be a member, help more Ohioans prevent and treat chronic diseases like diabetes, provide high quality early childhood education, and feed kids in need of consistent, healthy meals.

Ohio YMCAs ask to return to full tax exempt status, as they should be as 501(c)(3)s. Taxing memberships is inequitable and runs contrary to the organizations' charitable purpose. A YMCA should not have to tax a member to use a treadmill when the Y does not pay tax to purchase the treadmill.

We help communities improve childhood health

The Y is not just a gym. It's a place where children learn from an early age about healthy eating and physical activity that helps prevent childhood and adult obesity. Childhood obesity has become an epidemic

in Ohio. According to national estimates, 30-34% of Ohio's children age 10-17 are overweight or obese.

The Ohio Alliance of YMCAs, along with local YMCAs across the state, are working to create fair opportunities for children to access healthy food and physical activity. Our primary goal is to improve childhood health through sustainable and systemic change.

Across the country, YMCA child care centers are implementing Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards. HEPA sets goals for (1) the nutritional quality of the foods and beverages provided in early childhood and school age care, (2) the amount of physical activity children and youth accumulate while attending these programs, (3) engaging parents of the children and youth in our child care programs, and (4) limiting screen time for program participants.

As YMCAs implement these standards, and as other health-conscience child care centers reach similar goals, our children benefit by improved learning and health. Ohio's tiered quality rating and improvement system (Step Up to Quality) should acknowledge centers that achieve these health-related goals.

There is a relationship between health and the built environment. How healthy we are often reflects the way our buildings and neighborhoods function. We can improve lives and foster healthy outcomes by changing our approach when building cities, streets, and places. The federal government invests little in this work, and Ohio invests even less. Ohio must prioritize and fund Safe Routes to School and Complete Streets, which enable children and families to safely walk and bike to school and throughout

their communities. These infrastructure improvements also make Ohio communities more attractive to businesses looking to settle in our state.

YMCAs are cause-driven organizations

Across Ohio, YMCAs are the cornerstone of many local communities. At the Y, families come together, volunteers give countless hours, and children thrive, all regardless of income. We impact many lives in a myriad of ways.

Critical to our mission work is our charitable status. We not only provide programs vital to strong communities, such as early learning and school age programs, but also give back. Income is not a determinant to become a Y member. We give scholarships to thousands of Ohioans each year. In 2015, Ohio Ys gave over \$23 million in scholarships to community members, and 29,000 Ohioans volunteered thousands of hours of their time because they believe in the Y.

Please support our mission and protect our charitable, tax-exempt status.

Supporting one charity over another

While we support tax incentives that encourage charitable giving, specific income tax check offs that favor one charity over another set a poor precedent and leave Ohio's nonprofits on uneven footing with one another.

We support our colleagues in charitable work, and partner with many of them to further their missions as well as our own. Yet, if the state overtly supports one charity over another with the option of a tax donation check off on personal income tax forms, every other charity would be disadvantaged. We ask the state not to hurt one charity to help another.