



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS  
COLLABORATIVE of WNY**

January 11, 2023

Dear Attorney General Letitia James;

The Boys & Girls Clubs Collaborative of WNY (BGCC WNY) would like to extend our congratulations on entering your new term as our Attorney General. We appreciate all that you do to support Western New York youth.

BGCC WNY stands as 1, serving 40 plus Clubhouses in Western New York. Based on the needs within our region, the leaders of our 12 Clubs prioritize quality out-of-school time programming where equity and inclusion are embedded and enhanced with mental health support through the regional Mental Health Access Program. Working with our diverse staff and over 17,500 WNY kids, we come together to ensure continued support for our efforts that improve education, leadership skills, and workforce readiness outcomes in emotionally and physically safe out-of-school time spaces.

Our kids surrounding the city of Buffalo have endured so much post-pandemic and in the last year from the Tops shooting, to the deadly blizzard, to the November storm, to a family fire where 5 kids lost their lives, and last weekend's horrific injury in the Bills organization. This tragedy has compounded the need for mental health support in WNY as historically as the blizzard.

The Mother Cabrini Health Foundation assisted BGCC WNY with \$500,000 in funds for a Mental Health Access Program across WNY in 2021. The program provides licensed counselors for children living in this unprecedented time of high-stress environments and trauma exposure. The dynamics of the Collaborative are unique. The members represent urban, suburban, and rural areas with distinct challenges and needs. In addition to the environmental trauma, many of our children come from single-parent homes, live at or below the poverty level, have been exposed to domestic or community violence and drug use, or have incarcerated parents.

Our Mental Health Access Program:

Provides Mental Health First Aid training to all WNY Club staff.

Brings licensed counselors to the Clubs throughout the Collaborative to provide crisis support and work through mental health and behavioral challenges with children in a safe and inclusive setting. In 2022, 682 kids across WNY received 1:1 counseling in their Club.



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Provides Club activities that build skills in areas of mindfulness, mental health wellness, stress relief, and coping. In 2022, 3,738 kids across WNY participated in mental health wellness activities. All Clubs provide multiple opportunities to participate weekly. For example, the 1,126 kids in the Boys & Girls Club of Buffalo completed 23,346 activities this year.

Together, we ask for your help to continue this effort and efforts like this in community-based organizations specifically in Western NY. Only together, in Collaboration, will we ensure great futures for our kids.

Respectfully Submitted;

Tracy Bradshaw

CEO

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