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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
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ALLEGHENY

November 20, 2020

Dr. Lisa Abel-Palmieri, Chief Executive Officer Boys & Girls Club of Western Pennsylvania
33 Terminal Way
Suite 435A
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Mr. Robert Luffy
Chair, Boys & Girls Club of Western Pennsylvania
33 Terminal Way
Suite 435A
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Re: LaRosa Boys & Girls Club of McKeesport

Dear Dr. Abel-Palmieri and Mr. Robert Luffy:

I write this letter to express my extreme disappointment and opposition to the closing of the LaRosa Boys & Girls Club located in the City of McKeesport. The LaRosa Boys & Girls Club has been a staple in the McKeesport and greater Mon Valley community for nearly 75 years and has provided our youth with an abundance of extra-curricular activities, tutoring, and programming that has helped to prepare them to be future leaders.

I am sure that you are fully aware of the demographics in which the McKeesport Boys & Girls Club serves and find it disheartening that in such turbulent times you would chose to close a facility that proves beneficial to our community and our at-risk-youth. I, as a child, spent countless hours at this facility and can attest, firsthand, to the positive impact that it has had on many young people in our region. I cannot sit by idly and watch these services be ripped away from our children and community.

The announcement to close the LaRosa Boys & Girls Club highlights that your organization no longer has an interest or desire to serve low-income communities. Prior to making this decision there should have been input from community members, families, youth, and stakeholders. Instead we were all blindsided by this decision. It is clear that your organization's mission to "activate and advance the potential in every child by doing whatever it takes to ensure they have great futures" does not apply to children in McKeesport and Mon Valley region, as this decision comes just six months after your announcement to close the Duquesne-West Mifflin Boys and Girls Club.

From the time I took office, I have openly supported grant funding for the Boys and Girls Club of Western, PA. I have written various letters to support programs that your organization intended to implement that I felt would positively impact the McKeesport location. One program that I was particularly looking forward to helping our youth was the AI Pathways Institute. I am not sure why the sudden change of mind or why suddenly you feel that this location is not deserving of the new programming, but our youth deserves these programs and would benefit substantially from them just like any child in Western, PA. I understand that participation in these programs may be low right now, but we are faced with a pandemic which has had a detrimental impact on our youth and their families.

Additionally, it is my understanding that the Boys & Girls Club of Western, PA intends to sell the current location that houses the LaRosa Boys & Girls Club at fair market value. I firmly believe that your organization should return this facility to the community if you no longer wish to operate it as a Boys & Girls Club. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development allocated \$300,000 to make structural repairs to this facility to ensure that it could continue to serve under-privileged youth in our community. Given that taxpayers recently made this significant investment to preserve this location for future generations, it is only right that the intended mission continue.

Further, I would like to provide that, the City of McKeesport has my full support in their expressed interest to take over ownership of this facility. The City intends to partner with a local non-profit to continue to fulfill the legacy of the LaRosa Boys & Girls Club, by serving children of McKeesport and surrounding communities. It is my hope that you will do the right thing and return this asset to the City of McKeesport.

Should any questions arise regarding my stance on this situation, please do not hesitate to contact me at 412-664-0035.

Yours In Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Austin Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Austin Davis
State Representative
35th Legislative District