



**Office of Children  
and Family Services**

**Senate Standing Committee on Racing,  
Gaming, and Wagering  
Assembly Standing Committee on Racing  
and Wagering**

**Joint Public Hearing on Mobile Sports  
Betting in NY: A First Year Review and its  
Budget Impact**

**Testimony of  
Nina Aledort, Ph.D.  
Deputy Commissioner**

**January 31, 2023**

**Senate Standing Committee on Racing, Gaming, and Wagering**  
**Assembly Standing Committee on Racing and Wagering**  
**Joint Public Hearing on Mobile Sports Betting in NY: A First Year Review & Its**  
**Budget Impact**  
**January 31, 2023, 9:30 AM**  
**Testimony of Nina Aledort, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner**  
**New York State Office of Children and Family Services**

I am pleased to submit this testimony on Mobile Sports Betting in New York: A First Year Review and its Budget Impact on behalf of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). I am Dr. Nina Aledort, Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Youth Development and Partnerships for Success at OCFS. Thank you to Senate Chair Addabbo and Assembly Chair Pretlow for convening this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

OCFS is proud and excited to administer the annual \$5 million Youth Sports and Education Opportunity funding that was authorized in the enabling statute for mobile sports wagering.<sup>1</sup> This funding is being used to support and build interest in sports for underserved children and youth, ages 6-18, across New York State. OCFS is grateful to Assembly Member Wallace for her work and dedication in advocating for this important initiative and for her input, along with national and local experts in sports education, in structuring the requirements of the program.

Sadly, sports and sporting activities have become increasingly out of reach for many of New York's families due to the increasing costs and a growing preference for travel programs over local recreational sports programs. A report from the Aspen Institute<sup>2</sup> indicated that, on average, families spend \$883 per child per season on sports activities, and significant inequities exist. Youth in lower socio-economic areas, girls, and youth with physical and intellectual disabilities, in particular, face significant barriers to sports participation. According to the State of Play report,<sup>3</sup> New York saw a 15 percent decrease in high school athletic participation in the 2021-22 school year when compared to 2018-19. This annual Youth Sports and Education Opportunity funding provides a new, and sorely needed, opportunity for New York to improve access to and engagement in sports, and to re-build positive youth development infrastructure across the state in communities that are struggling.

OCFS allocated the Youth Sports and Education Opportunity funding through the statewide network of youth bureaus<sup>4</sup> in each county and New York City, which, because of their deep understanding of their local youth population and ties to their local communities, are uniquely situated to best guide the use of these funds for maximum, targeted impact. Each youth bureau was required to submit a plan that indicated how their funds would be spent, the target populations, partnering organizations, and intended activities. OCFS encouraged a wide and flexible definition of sports that includes organized activities with movement, including physical fitness activities such as yoga, hiking, dance, and active outdoors pursuits, to be able to engage youth who otherwise might not want to participate in traditional team sports.

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<sup>1</sup> New York State Racing, Pari-Mutuel Wagering and Breeding Law, §1367

<sup>2</sup> Project Play Youth Sports Challenges: Costs. Aspen Institute. [https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/youth-sports/facts/challenges#:~:text=For%20some%20sports%2C%20average%20annual,and%20tackle%20football%20\(%24581\)](https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/youth-sports/facts/challenges#:~:text=For%20some%20sports%2C%20average%20annual,and%20tackle%20football%20(%24581))

<sup>3</sup> State of Play (2022). Project Play, Aspen Institute. <https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/state-of-play-2022/project-play-impact-report>

<sup>4</sup> 22-OCFS-LCM-09 <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/2022/lcm/22-OCFS-LCM-09.pdf>; 23-OCFS-LCM-02 <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/2023/lcm/23-OCFS-LCM-02.pdf>

In order to ensure that the funding was reaching underserved youth as intended, youth bureaus must distribute funds to local organizations, municipalities, and/or local or municipal youth bureaus in their communities based on local need, considering factors including:

- Historically under-resourced communities
- Public housing
- High rates of family homelessness
- Opportunity Zones or neighborhoods/cities/areas deemed “low-income” via externally available tools, such as the New York State Council on Children and Families Kids’ Well-Being Indicator Clearinghouse, etc.
- Marginalized communities or groups with higher barriers to participation in sports, such as youth with disabilities, girls, transgender/gender non-binary youth, lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning identified youth
- Federally and/or New York State-recognized Indigenous tribes and tribal organizations
- Neighborhoods that experience higher rates of crime and violence and poorer performing schools

Priority consideration is encouraged for programs that serve youth identifying as Black, indigenous persons and people of color, and/or providers of adaptive sports for youth with physical disabilities. Additionally, youth bureaus are prohibited from funding for-profit organizations or elite programs, camps or teams, and the amount of funding that can be provided to any one organization is limited in order to encourage a mix of programming targeted to different local communities and populations. Each youth bureau receives a base allocation of funds, with the remainder distributed according to local youth population, in order to ensure funding equity across the state and provide funding stability for local programming.

Although initial data collection is still ongoing, here is a small sample of some of the innovative programs that Youth Sports and Education Opportunity funding has enabled for children and youth who otherwise may not have had access to these opportunities:

- Purchase of snow shoes and skis to expand the ability to provide free winter outdoor sports opportunities to youth in Clinton County
- Non-traditional programming providing opportunities that expose participants to a variety of activities, including boxing, yoga, basketball, and dance in Erie County
- Learn-to-skate and beginner hockey programs for 6-17 year-old youth in Niagara County
- Volleyball, basketball, and dance for girls in a New York City community with few existing structured sports activities
- A circus arts summer program, including flying trapeze, acrobatics and juggling in Orange County
- Therapeutic horseback riding for youth with disabilities in Rockland County
- Adaptive winter sports for youth with illnesses and disabilities in Warren County
- A surfing event for youth with special needs in Westchester County

The guiding principles OCFS relied upon in developing the Youth Sports and Education Opportunity program are that sports are effective tools in positive youth development and family engagement; sports improve the lives of young people by promoting positive social, emotional, health and educational outcomes and have important life-long effects; sports enable opportunities for young people to thrive through leadership roles; and coaching education greatly improves young people’s sports experience and overall development outcomes. New York’s local youth bureaus have enthusiastically embraced these principles and are excited

about, and incredibly grateful for, this new opportunity to encourage positive development in New York's children and youth by expanding their connections to sports and movement.

OCFS is incredibly grateful to our partners in the Legislature for dedicating a portion of the revenue generated by mobile sports wagering in New York to youth sports and education opportunities and looks forward to your continued support. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this testimony.