



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

January 21, 2026

Re: HCR 3038

Madam Chair Lee and members of the Joint Public Policy Committee, we are here today on behalf of the State Alliance of North Dakota YMCAs in support of House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 3038 recognizing the YMCA's 175th anniversary in 2026. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The YMCA has been part of North Dakota communities for nearly 140 years, with the first YMCA opening in Grand Forks in 1886, and Fargo shortly thereafter. Today, the State Alliance of North Dakota YMCAs—with charters in Bismarck, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot—serves nearly the entire state through the work of more than 2,200 staff and nearly 1,800 volunteers.

The YMCA is a trusted community partner that strengthens youth, families, and communities by promoting health, connection, and belonging. That sense of belonging is increasingly important today, as communities across the country face challenges related to social isolation, loneliness, and overall well-being. The YMCA's mission—building healthy spirit, mind, and body for all—has remained steady, even as its services have grown and expanded to meet the realities of each generation.

While the resolution that moves forward may be streamlined for efficiency, we want to highlight the legacy it reflects—because it shows the YMCA's long-standing role as a community builder and problem-solver. ]Over the last 175 years, the YMCA has played a significant role in American life, including:

- Providing safe housing during the Industrial Revolution
- Pioneering the first night school and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- Inventing the game of basketball
- Delivering the first group swim lessons
- Leading humanitarian efforts during wartime, including the work of YMCA leader John R. Mott, who later received the Nobel Peace Prize for his service and leadership
- Establishing Youth and Government in 1936, a civic engagement program that continues to this day
- Serving as the birthplace of Father's Day, first celebrated at the Spokane YMCA in 1910
- Becoming the nation's leading nonprofit provider of childcare and afterschool programs beginning in the 1970s
- Serving as a leading provider of emergency childcare for frontline workers and a significant provider of food assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic

These examples reflect a consistent theme: the YMCA steps in where communities need support most—then builds sustainable, lasting solutions.

Nationally, the YMCA remains one of the largest and most impactful charitable nonprofits in the country, with:

- 2,600 YMCAs serving more than 10,000 communities
- More than 300,000 staff and hundreds of thousands of volunteers
- Programs reaching more than 17 million people annually, including millions of children and youth

Here in North Dakota, our YMCAs continue to provide essential programs that strengthen families and support health and well-being, creating connected communities and supporting long-term public health outcomes, including:

- Swim lessons and water safety
- Camping and youth development programs
- Youth sports
- Meal programs
- Lifestyle health programs
- Fitness and well-being programming, including services for older adults, where the YMCA is the nation's largest provider of fitness programs for seniors

This resolution also aligns with broader statewide goals, all of which are reflected in North Dakota's unique Rural Health Transformation plan, including improving health outcomes, strengthening community connections, and supporting prevention-focused wellness efforts. The YMCA is uniquely positioned to advance those goals because it meets people where they are—whether that's through youth development, family support, senior programming, fitness, or community-building activities.

In closing, we respectfully ask for your support of this resolution recognizing the YMCA's 175 years of service, and the impact YMCAs continue to have in North Dakota communities every day. On behalf of the State Alliance of North Dakota YMCAs, thank you for your time, your consideration for HCR 3038, and your continued support of the people and communities we serve.

**Alliance of North Dakota YMCAs**

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