

**Senate Judiciary Committee**

**“Community Solutions to Breaking the Cycle of Heroin and Opioid Addiction”**

**March 17, 2014**

**Questions for the Record from Ranking Member Charles E. Grassley**

**Mary Alice McKenzie, Executive Director, Boys and Girls Club, Burlington, VT**

1. *You mentioned that you have learned from youth in Burlington that there needs to be a consistent message provided to them about the dangers associated with drug use, even from an early age. As you wrote in your prepared testimony, kids have told you and your organization: “If you first start talking to me about drugs in high school, you are way too late. I smoked my first joint at (pick a number) from 8 to 12 years old.”*

*Do you believe that an important part of the community’s prevention efforts to battle opioid abuse should include discouraging youth from using all kinds of illegal drugs, including marijuana? How has the recent debate over legalizing marijuana affected the ability of groups like yours to transmit a consistent message along these lines?*

Senator Grassley, Thank you for asking this important question. The Boys & Girls Club in Burlington believes that Vermont should not legalize marijuana at this time.

We believe that it is critical to do everything in our power to discourage children and youth from using all addictive substances, including marijuana, alcohol and tobacco. We believe that we must create more effective prevention programs that are sustainably funded, consistently messaged and that begin at much earlier ages. We believe that in addition to more treatment options, better funded and coordinated law enforcement, Vermont needs to create a culture of health through more effective prevention efforts regarding all addictive substances, including marijuana, alcohol and tobacco.