



May 7, 2026

RE: Letter of Support for the City of Toronto's CityServe Summer Expansion Initiative

To Members of the Executive Committee,

Founded in 2007, YAAACE (Youth Association for Academics, Athletics and Character Education) is a Black-led, Black-focused and Black-serving charitable organization committed to mitigating opportunity gaps and strengthening outcomes for Black, equity-denied and justice-involved youth across Toronto. YAAACE is pleased to provide this letter in strong support of the City of Toronto's proposed CityServe Summer Expansion Initiative for youth ages 14–18.

Through our participation in the current CityServe cohort, we have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact that structured, paid community-based employment opportunities can have on young people. The program has created meaningful pathways for youth to build confidence, strengthen workforce readiness skills, develop positive peer and mentor relationships and contribute directly to their communities in purposeful ways.

What makes this initiative particularly impactful is the focus on prevention, belonging and early intervention during a critical period. Summer months often present increased vulnerability for many youth due to reduced structure, social isolation, economic barriers and heightened exposure to community violence and unsafe environments. Programs like CityServe help address these realities by creating safe, supportive and opportunity-focused spaces where youth can remain engaged, connected and future-focused. We recognize that youth achieve the strongest outcomes when they are not only engaged socially but when they are meaningfully connected to skill-building, responsibility, leadership development and real-world experience.

The current CityServe model has demonstrated strong potential in fostering early labour market attachment, increasing civic engagement, building transferable employability skills and strengthening youth confidence and community connection. We have observed youth develop stronger communication skills, increased accountability, improved teamwork and a greater sense of pride in contributing positively to their communities.

Expanding this initiative during the summer period is both timely and necessary. Continued investment into community-based workforce development and violence prevention initiatives is critical to supporting youth who face systemic barriers and limited access to opportunities.

YAAACE is proud to support this initiative and remains committed to collaborating with the City of Toronto and community partners to create safer communities, stronger pathways and improved outcomes for youth across our city.

Respectfully,

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