



CITY OF LAUREL OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Keith R. Sydnor
Mayor

Joseph R. Robison - Laurel Municipal Center
8103 Sandy Spring Road, Laurel, MD 20707-2502
Phone: 301-725-5300 ext. 2124 • Fax: 301-725-6831

February 26, 2024

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Barnes,

The City of Laurel supports House Bill 1136 which will provide funding for the Youth Services Bureaus (YSB). The City began its partnership with the State only recently, in 2017, to provide delinquency prevention and intervention services based on funds from both the State and local government. Unfortunately, in 2020 the City lost State funding because of a shift in the priorities of the Governor's Office for Children from providing mental health services; but, even without those funds, Laurel Helping Hands continued to provide mental health services to assist youth and their families.

Laurel Helping Hands recognizes that the family is the first and most important support system in a person's life and that the family (especially parents) are the primary agents of change in a youth's life so they believe that the best way to serve a youth is by working with the entire family system to ensure that youth and caregivers all learn new skills and strategies to decrease problem behaviors. They offer families a safe place to address issues such as school problems and truancy, trauma, bullying, depression, and suicidal ideation. They also work closely with area schools, providing psychoeducational groups and presentations upon request.

Funding this bill would increase the wrap-around and preventative services desperately needed to address growing youth mental health needs and address juvenile crime in our community. The services are proven to work in keeping young people out of the criminal justice system, with Youth Services Bureaus consistently having a 95% success rate in diverting youth from juvenile services.

We respectfully request that you support the funding of Youth Services Bureaus by voting in favor of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith R. Sydnor", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Keith R. Sydnor
Mayor