



Greenbelt Middle School
6301 Breezewood Drive
Greenbelt MD 20770

March 7, 2024

Dear Appropriations Committee,

Greenbelt Middle School strongly supports House Bill 1136 which will designate funding for Youth Services Bureau (YSB) within the State's Budget. Prince George's County Public Schools and Greenbelt Middle School have been long-time partners with Greenbelt CARES Youth Services Bureau to provide mental health, tutoring and community resources to students and families at our school. Greenbelt CARES provides important mental health services, in particular family counseling services to assist youth and their families.

Greenbelt CARES provides effective services to our community and is able to be responsive to local needs that arise. Greenbelt CARES offers families a safe place to address difficult issues such as truancy, violence, trauma, bullying, depression and suicidal ideation. In addition, the program offers tutoring, GED preparation, Parenting classes, Anger Management Classes and crisis intervention to ensure youth are successful. Designating funding for Youth Services Bureaus will guarantee that families in our communities can count on these programs in times of need. Youth Services Bureaus are mandated in state law to serve youth and families by providing group and family counseling, information and referral services, crisis intervention including suicide assessments, and substance use assessments and referrals. Designated funding for Youth Services Bureaus makes sense to ensure that the State continues to have a network of programs providing these services.

HB 1136 would increase the prevention and intervention services desperately needed to address growing youth mental health needs in our young people. A quarter of Maryland's children and adolescents have one or more diagnosed emotional, behavioral, or developmental condition. And an alarming 13% of children and adolescents report having anxiety or depression.

The funding this bill provides would increase services desperately needed to address spiking incidents of juvenile crime, and help to make sure that the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2022 is successful by providing community based programs for youth. 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.

I respectfully request that you support HB 1136 to designate funding for Youth Services Bureau by voting in favor of this legislation.

With a resounding recommendation,

Joan M. Jackson

Joan M. Jackson, PhD
Community School Coordinator