

House Appropriation Committee

March 7, 2024

House Bill 1136 - Human Services - Youth Services Bureaus – Funding

Youth Services Bureau Restoration Act

Support

The Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers supports House Bill 1136 - Human Services - Youth Services Bureaus - Funding (Youth Services Bureau Restoration Act). Closing community based Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) in recent years left a hole in neighborhoods where youth and their families had been receiving services and support for decades.

Youth Service Bureaus are community-based services that promote the safety, health and well-being of Maryland children, youth and their families by providing family-focused substance use disorder and behavioral health services. A wide array of additional services may also be available such as case management, tutoring, mentoring, violence risk assessments, parenting education and groups, and school based anger management groups. Moreover, Youth Service Bureaus are in a unique position to develop partnerships with local schools, faith organizations, other service providers, and local governments that strengthen families.

Because our children lost critical developmental time with peers and in school as a consequence of pandemic isolation, it's no surprise our communities have emerged with a greater need for services to support families and their children. The success of YSBs at primary prevention is indisputable:

- According to the Department of Juvenile Services, 95% of youth served by formal counseling do not enter the juvenile justice system 2 years after the intervention is concluded.
- When measured using the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS) - considered the gold standard for assessing and tracking youth outcomes - 80% of youth served by YSBs in Maryland showed significant improvement, compared to 60% nationally.
- YSBs are also cost effective; every \$1 invested by the State leverages an additional \$8 in services.

HB 1136 would re-establish and strengthen preventative services desperately needed to address spiking incidents of juvenile crime and the need for more costly “deep end” intervention.

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After several years of continual budget reductions, we support the call in HB 1136 to restore funding and increase the reach of these incontrovertibly effective services. By mandating state funding of \$4.8 million in FY 2026, Youth Service Bureaus shuttered in recent years can be reopened, and existing YSB's strengthened. Given we are now paying \$40,000 to \$60,000 per child or youth for roughly 50 children (\$3 million each month) to house those without placement as a result of high intensity needs, surely we can find \$4.8 million to invest in preventing the need.

We urge a favorable report on HB 1136.

Respectfully,

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