

CITY OF GREENBELT, MARYLAND

POLICE DEPARTMENT

550 CRESCENT ROAD, GREENBELT, MD 20770



Richard Bowers
Chief of Police

Testimony submitted to the House Appropriations Committee HB1136 - Support March 7, 2024

The City of Greenbelt partnered with the State for over 50 years to fund the Greenbelt CARES Youth Service Bureau. Unfortunately, the funding for Youth Service Bureaus has decreased over time resulting in fewer resources in communities to serve young people and their families. As the current Chief of the Greenbelt Police Department, I urge your support for HB 1136 which will return funding to YSBs.

As a law enforcement officer, I have seen the benefit of working with young people early, before they get into the juvenile justice system. The Greenbelt Police Department relies on Greenbelt CARES as a resource for residents facing difficult family and individual issues. Officers carry information about the Bureau in their cars and pass along information to individuals and families they encounter who might benefit from these prevention and intervention services. Our City Crisis Intervention Team, which includes a Social Worker, works closely with Greenbelt CARES to refer families in crisis and to important mental health services.

Greenbelt CARES Youth Service Bureau provides an array of mental health and support services including counseling services, parenting classes, school-based groups, crisis intervention services, tutoring, GED preparation, and substance use disorder assessments for our local youth. They do highly effective work and are a vital part of our community and the City's efforts to support residents facing challenging times. Greenbelt CARES is well respected and known to our residents as a safe and effective place to seek services when a youth is experiencing mental health or behavioral issues.

The funding this bill provides would increase the wrap-around and preventative services desperately needed to address spiking incidents of juvenile crime, to help 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.

I respectfully ask that you support this bill to protect the funding for programs like Greenbelt CARES and re-establish this partnership between the State and communities like the City of Greenbelt.

Richard Bowers
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