



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Commission on Juvenile Justice

Marc Elrich
County Executive

James C. Bridgers, Jr. Ph.D., MBA
Director

March 7, 2024
HB 1136 -- Favorable

Delegate Ben Barnes
Chair, Appropriations Committee
Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Barnes:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice (MC CJJ) in **support of House Bill 1136, the Youth Services Bureau Restoration Act**. MC CJJ was established to advise the Montgomery County Executive, County Council and the Juvenile Court on matters concerning juvenile justice. Our work includes gathering and disseminating information from public and private agencies serving youth, monitoring juvenile justice programs and services, visiting facilities, closely following relevant State and local legislation, and making recommendations regarding juvenile needs. MC CJJ is composed of appointed, volunteer citizen members, and agency members that include the Child Welfare Services Program, the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office, the Office of the Public Defender, the Montgomery County Police Department, Montgomery County Public Schools, and the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services.

Maryland Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) are a valuable resource in serving children in local communities with effective youth delinquency diversion treatment and family intervention services, with an emphasis on treatment for mental health and substance use disorders. Maryland has relied on YSBs for such resources for the past 40 years. However, the previous Administration's policies led to an erosion of funding for YSBs which diminished them from a total of 22 in 10 jurisdictions to seven that exist today in just three jurisdictions. At a time when children are still suffering the mental health effects of the pandemic, including high incidents of substance use disorders, this resource is needed more than ever to provide support for children and families that will help them to thrive and reduce the incidents of juvenile justice system involvement. This bill's allocation of \$4.8 million in FY 2026 would allow for the re-establishment of bureaus closed under the previous Administration and would assist with programming within local communities for prevention, diversion, and Child in Need of Services (CINS) resources.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report on HB 1136.

Sincerely,

Kevin Redden, Chair
Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice

Local Behavioral Health Authority • Behavioral Health and Crisis Services