

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 1136
Human Services – Youth Services Bureaus – Funding
(Youth Services Bureau Restoration Act)
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Honorable members of the legislature. Thank you for your time reading my testimony in support of House Bill 1136: Youth Services Bureaus Funding.

My name is Ivania Morales, and I am a first-generation Latinx American who is the first in my family to become a licensed social worker and Family Therapist. The adversities that my family went through throughout my childhood are like those who are going through something similar today as recent immigrants and/or first-generation children who are acculturating & assimilating into US culture faster than their families. The times may be different, but the challenges are similar.

If there were youth service bureaus in the 1990s or 2000s, they were not widely shared with the community (*or* were not in the community I lived in). If my family had the opportunity to utilize the services of a youth service bureau, we may have tackled various challenges differently *as a family* because of the many services youth service bureaus offer such as groups, therapy/counseling for children and their families, and educational programs.

Individuals cannot survive without families and friends; families cannot survive without community supports; community organizations cannot survive without a strong and stable infrastructure using the invaluable support from the local, state, and federal government level. We were never meant to tackle everything alone, because we're *not* alone no matter how it may feel sometimes. I experienced and witnessed my own family feel like there was no one to rely on, and it took too many years for that to change to feel connected. I see hope inspired in families and our communities who participate in any one of our programs at College Park Youth and Family Services simply from knowing they are connected and not alone.

That's why it's important to make services such as Youth Services Bureaus available to the community and to fully support them. That's why I am in support of House Bill 1136.

Thank you.