



**March 7, 2024**

**HB 1136  
Human Services - Youth Services Bureaus - Funding  
(Youth Services Bureau Restoration Act)**

**House Appropriations Committee**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 1136. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 1136 would help to fund Maryland Youth Services Bureaus, providing \$4.8 million annually starting in FY 2026. This funding would allow for the re-establishment of Maryland Youth Services Bureaus closed in recent years, and the strengthening of existing bureaus.

Maryland's Youth Service Bureaus build partnerships with nonprofits, schools, faith-based organizations, and government agencies to enhance the health, safety and well-being of Maryland's children, youth and families. Maryland's Youth Service Bureaus have successfully provided effective interventions to children and their families for decades. Among the successes are: 1.) 95% of youth served in formal counseling do not enter the youth justice system two years after ending counseling, 2.) 80% of youth assessed by Maryland's Youth Service Bureaus showed significant improvement, compared to the 60% national standard and 3.) eight dollars in additional services were leveraged for every on dollar invested by the state into Maryland Youth Service Bureaus.

In the pastoral statement *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice* (2000), the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated, "We call upon government to redirect the vast amount of public resources away from building more and more prisons and toward better and more effective programs aimed at crime prevention, rehabilitation, education efforts, substance abuse treatment, and programs of probation, parole and reintegration." Additionally, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has further stated that "society must never respond to children who have committed

crimes as though they are somehow equal to adults fully formed in conscience and fully aware of their actions.”

HB 1136 would increase the wrap-around and preventative services desperately needed to address spiking incidents of gun violence involving teens, including the increase in the number of youth victims of homicide and nonfatal shootings. Maryland’s Youth Service Bureaus are proven to work in keeping young people out of the criminal justice system. After several years of continual budget reductions, we support the call in HB 1136 to restore funding and increase the reach of these proven-effective services.

Accordingly, we urge the Maryland General Assembly to secure funding for Maryland Youth Services Bureaus into the future through House Bill 1136.