

**Support Letter for Youth Delinquency Prevention Fund**  
**SB537/HB1038**  
**Todd Thomas**

I am honored to be with to you today as a Maryland resident and a mentor volunteering with the Bowie Youth & Family Services. I'm here to speak in support of the Senate Bill 537/ House Bill 1038 and the Youth Delinquency Prevention Fund. This is an opportunity to increase the vital support and growth opportunities of which too many youth have too little access.

Money allocated to prevention programming represents a needed shift from responding to young people as a problem to investing in them as our future. These young people across the board are creative, valuable and most often, like you and I, making the best with what they have. The types of programs operated by the Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus have been studied and shown to increase the resources with which young people can build their lives and survive or avoid all together the pitfalls of loneliness, bullying, substance abuse and self-harm.

One type of programming the Youth Delinquency Prevention Fund will enable in Maryland is more young people engaging with a mentor, a trained adult who makes a safe space of listening without judgement, valuing the perspective of the young person, and so being a trusted voice when advice is sought. That young person has an adult who can be contacted in crisis and their parents have another resource for helping them and their child cope with life's stresses.

The French philosopher, paleontologist and Jesuit Priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said, "The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope." Let's give our young people in Maryland a powerful reason for hope.

I respectfully ask you to support Senate Bill 537/ House Bill 1038 and the Youth Delinquency Prevention Fund and, together with our youth, we will build a brighter future for all of Maryland. Thank you.