

JAMILA J. WOODS
Legislative District 26
Prince George's County

Judiciary Committee
Criminal Subcommittee
Chair, Juvenile Subcommittee
Public Safety Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 206
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3544
800-492-7122 Ext. 3544
Jamila.Woods@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony for HB1058 - *Youth Delinquency Prevention Fund - Establishment*

Good afternoon, Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Delegate Jamila Woods, and I am here today to request a favorable report on House Bill 1058, legislation establishing the Youth Delinquency Prevention Fund.

This bill reflects a simple but powerful principle: prevention works. If we are serious about public safety, about reducing juvenile justice involvement, and about strengthening families, we must invest upstream; before a young person becomes more involved in the system not after.

House Bill 1058 creates a dedicated, non-lapsing Youth Delinquency Prevention Fund to provide grants to community-based programs, including youth service bureaus, that focus on delinquency prevention, youth suicide prevention, substance use prevention, youth development, family stabilization, and youth advocacy. These are not abstract concepts. These are the very services that keep young people connected to their families, schools, and communities.

Across Maryland, community-based organizations have been doing this work for decades. Youth service bureaus, mental health providers, and family support programs have served as trusted first responders when a young person begins to struggle. They provide trauma-informed counseling, conflict mediation, mentoring, substance use prevention, and crisis intervention. They remove barriers to care. They stabilize families. They prevent escalation.

Yet in many parts of the State, access to these services has diminished due to inconsistent funding. Some counties no longer have a designated youth service bureau receiving state support. That leaves families without early intervention options and pushes young people closer to the juvenile justice system simply because prevention services were not available at the right time.

House Bill 1058 establishes a structure to correct that gap. The Fund will consist of appropriations from the State budget, interest earnings, and any other funds accepted for its benefit. It is a special, non-lapsing fund, meaning that money dedicated to prevention will stay dedicated to prevention. It will not revert to the General Fund. It will be held separately, accounted for separately, and subject to audit by the Office of Legislative Audits.

The bill also ensures transparency and accountability. Beginning in 2027, the administering office must report annually on the amount of funding distributed, the number and size of grants awarded, the number of children and families served—disaggregated by age, geography, race, and ethnicity—

and whether youth served later interacted with the criminal or juvenile justice system. It must also report any unspent funds and explain why they were not used. That level of reporting ensures that we are measuring impact, not just expenditures.

Today, you will hear from providers and advocates who work directly with youth across Maryland. They will speak about young people navigating trauma, substance use risk, school instability, and mental health challenges. Reminding us that many justice-involved adults were teenagers who never received meaningful early intervention. Emphasizing what research consistently shows: sustained investment in prevention programs reduces system involvement, strengthens public safety, and produces measurable savings over time.

House Bill 1058 does not mandate a specific funding level in statute. What it does is create the infrastructure so that when resources are available, they are directed intentionally toward prevention. It signals that Maryland is committed to investing before crisis, before arrest, and before incarceration.

If we want fewer young people in detention, fewer families in crisis, and stronger communities across this State, we must invest in the support that make those outcomes possible. The Youth Delinquency Prevention Fund is a practical, accountable step in that direction.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 1058.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Delegate Jamila J. Woods
Maryland House of Delegates
District 26 – Prince George's County