



**Testimony submitted to the House Appropriations Committee
February 18, 2020**

Support: HB 709 – Human Services – Youth Service Bureaus - Funding

My name is Dr. Liz Park, Director of Greenbelt CARES Youth Services Bureau and Chair of the Maryland Association of Youth Services Bureaus. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the importance of this bill that codifies the designation of funding for Youth Services Bureaus, something this legislature did for many years in recognition of the importance of maintaining this network of mental health and prevention services.

As you know, Youth Services Bureaus are codified in Maryland law within the Department of Juvenile Services statute to prevent juvenile delinquency and family disruption and promote positive youth development. YSBs have successfully been providing such early intervention/prevention counseling to thousands of at-risk youth and families annually for over 40 years.

As you know, YSBs are a longstanding partnership between state government and local governments where every state dollar generates an additional \$8 in services. Continuing this partnership makes good fiscal sense.

I am here to address a concern we have heard that designating these funds will take away local control. We disagree.

- Since 2015, per the Governor's Office for Children's (GOC) NOFA requirements, LMBs have been strongly encouraged, and at times required, to shift funding away from behavioral health/prevention for all youth to the funding of specific priority areas focused on specific populations of youth.
- GOC has notified jurisdictions of their intent to make all the funding dollars competitive, rather than preserving base funding for jurisdictions based on population formulas.

We see these actions as limiting local decision making.

We are looking for stable, reliable funding for the important prevention and intervention work we do with Maryland's youth and their families. We believe that designating these funds for mental health and prevention services guarantees jurisdictions the availability of these programs and ensures that these long-standing state and local government partnerships continue.

We ask for your support of House Bill 709 as it is even more urgent to protect these critical, effective, mandated services to Maryland's troubled youth and their families and keep them on a path to success.