



"Being here for Maryland's Children, Youth, and Families"

**Testimony submitted to House Judiciary Committee
April 1, 2021**

**Senate Bill 497 – Juvenile Services Education Board and Program –
Establishment, Powers, and Duties**

Support

The Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus, which represents a statewide network of Bureaus throughout the State of Maryland, Supports Senate Bill 497 - Juvenile Services Education Board and Program - Establishment, Powers, and Duties. Youth Service Bureaus provide prevention, intervention and treatment services and understand the importance of education on a youth's success.

The bill will improve the educational services offered to youth under the care of the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) by establishing the Juvenile Services Education Board in the Department of Juvenile Services. This Board will oversee and approve all educational services to all juveniles who are in a residential facility beginning July 1, 2022. DJS has a unique opportunity to impact a youth's education while under their care. Youth enter DJS with varying needs and skills and for various lengths of time. This Board will be able to focus on these unique needs and establish educational programs and services to best serve the youth under the care of DJS.

The legislation requires the Board to coordinate with the youth's current public school to ensure the youth's educational progress continues and ensures that the youth remains enrolled in that public school until the final disposition of the youth's case is determined. The bill also ensures that youth who are in the Department's custody for more than 4 weeks will receive a dedicated education plan. School success is an important component of rehabilitation and offers the youth opportunities for employment and secondary education. Youth who are under DJS custody and have already graduated will be offered secondary school educational opportunities, again allowing youth the chance to succeed once they return home.

We respectfully ask you to support this bill and offer **youth opportunities to thrive and become productive members of their communities.**

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