

CORY V. MCCRAY  
Legislative District 45  
Baltimore City

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Chair, Health and Human Services

Vice Chair, Capital Budget

Executive Nominations Committee

Legislative Policy Committee

Joint Committee on Gaming Oversight



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

## Vote Yes On Senate Bill 97

**Bill Title: Youth Enhancement Program - Establishment**

**Committee: Budget and Taxation, Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**Hearing Date: January 15, 2025**

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee,

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I write to you in support of Senate Bill 97, a pivotal piece of legislation that seeks to establish the *Youth Enhancement Program* within the Maryland State Department of Education. This program is designed to address the longstanding educational and social inequities faced by youth in urban jurisdictions, providing targeted support for individuals from historically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Senate Bill 97 proposes granting funding to nonprofit organizations that deliver essential services to early adolescent children and young adults—many of whom qualify for free or reduced-price meals. These young people face significant barriers to success, including economic hardship, limited mentorship, and a lack of educational resources. This legislation directly addresses those challenges by funding programs that focus on health and wellness, mental health, character development, and college and career readiness.

The holistic approach of this program is critical. By supporting initiatives in athletics, nutrition, and emotional well-being, Senate Bill 97 recognizes that academic achievement alone is insufficient. True success for these youth requires resilience, life skills, and emotional stability—qualities that can only be nurtured through continuous mentorship and comprehensive support. The inclusion of those who have previously benefited from these programs as mentors adds a powerful element of community-building and reinforces the cycle of empowerment.

Additionally, Senate Bill 97 ensures accountability through annual reports tracking student progress, allowing for continuous assessment and refinement of services. With a \$1 million annual appropriation starting in Fiscal Year 2027, this legislation secures sustained funding, ensuring that these vital services continue to have a meaningful, long-term impact.

In closing, Senate Bill 97 provides an invaluable opportunity to break cycles of disadvantage, creating a pathway for success for thousands of young Marylanders. I urge the Committee to lend its full support to this transformative initiative.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cory V. McCray', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cory V. McCray  
45<sup>th</sup> District