

## **HB1278 – Maryland Positive Youth Development Commission & Fund**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

**Submitted by:** Tammy Fraley, LaVale, Maryland (Allegany County) Former Allegany County Board of Education Member (2017–2024); Current Vice President, CASA of Western Maryland

**Date:** 3/11/2026

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit this testimony in **strong support of HB1278**, which establishes the Maryland Positive Youth Development Commission and the Maryland Positive Youth Development Fund to support programs that strengthen the well-being and resilience of Maryland’s youth.

My perspective on this issue comes from years of direct involvement with young people and families in our community. I served **eight years on the Allegany County Board of Education from 2017–2024**, where I saw firsthand the growing challenges facing young people—particularly related to mental health, social pressures, and the impacts of an increasingly digital world. I currently serve as **Vice President of CASA of Western Maryland**, an organization that advocates for children who have experienced abuse or neglect, and my husband works in **school safety**, supporting efforts to keep students safe in their learning environments.

Across each of these roles, one theme has remained constant: **young people thrive when they have positive outlets, trusted mentors, and supportive programs that help them build confidence, connection, and purpose.**

HB1278 provides an important opportunity to strengthen those supports. By establishing the Maryland Positive Youth Development Fund within the Maryland State Department of Education, this bill would provide sustainable resources for **afterschool programs, summer opportunities, mentoring initiatives, and youth mental health supports**. These programs play a critical role in helping young people develop leadership skills, form positive relationships, and navigate the challenges of adolescence.

The structure of this bill is also forward-thinking. By directing revenue from legal judgments or settlements involving social media companies that have harmed youth toward programs that directly support youth development, the legislation ensures that resources are reinvested in **solutions that strengthen young people and communities.**

Positive youth development programs are not simply enrichment - they are **preventative investments**. They help reduce risk factors, strengthen mental well-being, improve educational engagement, and connect young people with adults who care about their success.

Maryland has long recognized that supporting young people requires a partnership between schools, families, and community organizations. HB1278 strengthens that partnership and ensures we continue investing in programs that help young people grow into healthy, resilient, and engaged members of our communities.

**For young people in Western Maryland and communities across our state, access to positive youth development opportunities can make a meaningful difference in both their well-being and their future.**

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I respectfully request a **favorable report on HB1278.**

Sincerely,  
Tammy Fraley