

Girls on the Run of Montgomery County, MD

HB1278- Maryland Positive Youth Development Commission & Fund

Hearing before the Ways & Means Committee, March 11, 2026

Position: Favorable



Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Elizabeth McGlynn and I am Executive Director at Girls on the Run of Montgomery County, MD serving over 3,500 youth annually in Montgomery County through our positive youth development programs. We respectfully urge a favorable report on HB1278.

HB1278 creates a sustainable, youth-centered prevention strategy by establishing a Maryland Positive Youth Development Commission and a dedicated Positive Youth Development Fund within MSDE to support community-based programs serving youth from birth to 25.

This bill directly connects a growing problem — the documented harms associated with excessive and unregulated social media use — with a proven solution: structured, relationship-based youth programming.

National experts, including the American Psychological Association and the U.S. Surgeon General, have raised concerns about links between high social media use and anxiety, depression, poor sleep, and social isolation. At the same time, Maryland lacks a dedicated, sustainable funding stream for youth development programs outside school hours. High-quality afterschool, summer, and mentoring programs provide:

- Consistent, caring adult relationships that build belonging and resilience
- Safe, supervised time that reduces excessive screen use
- Social-emotional skill-building that strengthens self-regulation
- Physical activity and healthy routines that protect sleep and well-being
- Trusted mentors who help youth process harmful online content

At Girls on the Run, we see these protective factors every day. One parent wrote this in our end of season survey; *My daughter did not realize her abilities to not only run but to speak up and use her voice. She'd be so happy and ready for practice after school and eager to learn how to not only be an inspiration to others but to endure and believe in herself as well! I'm truly grateful for her coaches and this team, Girls on the Run helped her dream big and achieve many goals.*

Maryland ranks in the bottom 10 states for afterschool access. More than 567,000 Maryland children would participate in an afterschool program if one were available, yet roughly three in four are missing out — often due to cost and lack of availability.

HB1278 smartly links potential social media litigation proceeds to prevention, turning restitution into a long-term investment in youth well-being. The bill also ensures funds are supplemental and do not replace existing youth development funding.

This is a practical prevention bill. It funds what works: relationships, belonging, skill-building, and real-world engagement.

On behalf of Girls on the Run and the youth we serve in Montgomery County, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB1278.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth McGlynn
Executive Director
Girls on the Run of Montgomery County, MD