

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 Jen Rinehart, and I am a parent of a 19-year-old in Frederick County. I am writing to ask you to support HB1278.

Like many families, we have navigated the realities of social media during my daughter's teen years. It is part of our children's world. While it can have benefits, I have seen firsthand how too much screen time can impact sleep, mood, confidence, and real-life connections.

What made biggest difference for our family is access to afterschool and summer programs. These programs gave my child:

- Safe, supervised time after school
- Positive adult role models who expanded her circle of caring adults
- Real friendships and teamwork experiences
- Lots of time outdoors and away from screens
- Opportunities to try new things and build skills

Not every family has access to programs like this. Cost and availability are real barriers. When safe, structured options are not available, screens often become the default.

Today my daughter is a freshman in college, majoring in environmental science. Her passion for supporting the environment and sustainability was nurtured by her afterschool and summer program, which has a big focus on the outdoors and nature. When she comes home for the summer, she will be a summer camp counselor at the same program that she grew up attending.

HB1278 creates a dedicated fund to support community-based youth development programs across Maryland to give more young people the kinds of experiences that my daughter had. It is a practical prevention bill. Instead of only responding to the harms of social media, it invests in real-world spaces where young people can build relationships, find their passions, develop skills, and thrive.

As a parent/caregiver, I know how important it is to have supportive environments beyond the school day. This bill helps expand those environments statewide.

For the well-being of Maryland's children and families, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB1278.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jen Rinehart
Adamstown, MD