

**HB1278- Maryland Positive Youth Development Commission & Fund**  
**Hearing before the Ways & Means Committee, March 11, 2026**  
**Position: Favorable**

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

My name is Alvaro T, and I am a 10th grade student from Prince George's County. I am involved in VineCorps. I am asking you to support HB1278.

Young people in my generation spend a lot of time online. Social media can be fun and helpful, but it can also be overwhelming. Many of us see content that affects our mental health, sleep, and confidence. Sometimes it replaces real connections.

What makes the biggest difference for me is having a place to go after school and during the summer where I feel safe, supported, and connected to real people.

In this VineCorps program, I received encouragement, and when I'm having a bad day, they listen attentively. They helped me gain confidence and focus on not spending all my time online. Thanks to this program, I feel more motivated

HB1278 would create a fund to support more programs like mine across Maryland. It connects the problem of social media harms to a real solution — giving young people safe, supportive spaces outside of school.

Not every young person has access to these programs. This bill would help change that.

Please give HB1278 a favorable report so more youth like me can have places to belong, grow, and thrive in real life.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Alvaro,

Prince George's County

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

My name is Angel Galeas. I am an 11th grader from Prince Georges County. I am involved in the afterschool program called VineCorps. I am asking you to support the HB1278 bill.

As a schooler, many teenagers my age spend too much time on social media and hinders our mental health to a large extent, if used excessively. Sleep, communication skills, lack of confidence, depression, isolation, are many of the sacrifices a cause of not having social interactions. The spark of making face-to-face interactions is close to extinction.

My afterschool program -VineCorps- made a very positive impact on my life. VineCrops provides safety, inclusivity, new learning opportunities, binds friendships, builds character, and brings new experiences. As a newcomer, the hospitality I have received from VineCorps has made me consider VineCorps as my second family. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to attend this afterschool program. However, not all teenagers are as fortunate as I am.

From your support of this bill, your act will be greatly appreciated and will positively affect many teenagers' lives just like mine.

Thank you dearly for your time

Sincerely, Angel Galeas

Hyattsville/Prince Georges County

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

My name is Carter and I am a 11th grade student from Prince Georges County Public Schools. I am involved in VineCorps Afterschool program. I am asking you to support HB1278.

Young people in my generation spend a lot of time online. Social media can be fun and helpful, but it can also be overwhelming. Many of us see content that affects our mental health, sleep, and confidence. Sometimes it replaces real connections.

What makes the biggest difference for me is having a place to go after school and during the summer where I feel safe, supported, and connected to real people.

Because of vinecorps, I was able to get extra help with tutoring for the classes I wasn't doing well in. I brought my GPA up this year and I am super proud of myself. I also got a chance to do things with friends I normally wouldn't do, like hiking cool places far from where we live. All of the vinecorps staff are so nice, understanding, and supportive. I love how they connect with everyone, with all of our differences and backgrounds. They put a lot of effort into creating a safe space for us to be ourselves and explore our world. I'm most grateful for the soccer program that allowed me to continue practicing soccer after my school's season was over. Vinecorps helped set up a league and coached us through many games with other leagues in the area. I am so glad Vinecorps works with my school, I feel really lucky.

HB1278 would create a fund to support more programs like mine across Maryland. It connects the problem of social media harms to a real solution — giving young people safe, supportive spaces outside of school.

Not every young person has access to these programs. This bill would help change that.

Please give HB1278 a favorable report so more youth like me can have places to belong, grow, and thrive in real life.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Carter

Bowie, Prince Georges County MD

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

My name is Jefferson and I am a 10th grade student from Prince George's County/Hyattville. I am involved in VineCorps. I am asking you to support HB1278.

Young people in my generation spend a lot of time online. Social media can be fun and helpful, but it can also be overwhelming. Many of us see content that affects our mental health, sleep, and confidence. Sometimes it replaces real connections.

What makes the biggest difference for me is having a place to go after school and during the summer where I feel safe, supported, and connected to real people.

The VineCorps group is one of the best groups I've ever been in at a school because it has helped me improve my English, make good friends, and even find love thanks to all the trips we've taken. It's a great group because it offers everything a student needs. It would be good if the government provided more support so that students and the group have more resources.

In my program, I have:

- Built relationships with adults whom I trust
- Made friends in person, not just online
- Learned skills that help me manage stress and make good decisions
- Stayed active and engaged instead of scrolling

HB1278 would create a fund to support more programs like mine across Maryland. It connects the problem of social media harms to a real solution — giving young people safe, supportive spaces outside of school.

Not every young person has access to these programs. This bill would help change that.

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Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jefferson

Bladensburg, Prince George's County

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

My name is Luis, and I am a 10th grade student from Hyattsville . I am involved in VineCorps. I am asking you to support HB1278.

Young people in my generation spend a lot of time online. Social media can be fun and helpful, but it can also be overwhelming. Many of us see content that affects our mental health, sleep, and confidence. Sometimes it replaces real connections.

What makes the biggest difference for me is having a place to go after school and during the summer where I feel safe, supported, and connected to real people.

I joined VineCorps because I wanted to meet new people and participate more in school activities. So I joined them and they help me with my homework and support me in my work. Also they helped me to have control over my phone and thus have better mental health.

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Not every young person has access to these programs. This bill would help change that.

Please give HB1278 a favorable report so more youth like me can have places to belong, grow, and thrive in real life.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Luis  
Hyattsville

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

My name is Morcire Conde, and I am a Junior in High School student from Prince George County. I am involved in VineCorps. I am asking you to support HB1278.

Young people in my generation spend a lot of time online. Social media can be fun and helpful, but it can also be overwhelming. Many of us see content that affects our mental health, sleep, and confidence. Sometimes it replaces real connections.

What makes the biggest difference for me is having a place to go after school and during the summer where I feel safe, supported, and connected to real people.

Vinecorp has supported me in many ways I started doing things I've never done before and that helped me get out of my comfort zone. I feel more confident in my social skills. Another thing VineCorp has helped me done was finding a job they always here to support me do whatever I want I feel like they were always there for me every time I needed help they also helped me write a resume for a job application on top of that, a staff member helped me practice on his own birthday I am very thankful for having VineCorp and everything they did for me.

HB1278 would create a fund to support more programs like mine across Maryland. It connects the problem of social media harms to a real solution — giving young people safe, supportive spaces outside of school.

Not every young person has access to these programs. This bill would help change that.

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Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Morcire Conde  
Greenbelt/Prince George County

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

My name is Ofir Gomez, and I am a 10th grade student from Hyattsville. I am involved in VineCorps. I am asking you to support HB1278.

Young people in my generation spend a lot of time online. Social media can be fun and helpful, but it can also be overwhelming. Many of us see content that affects our mental health, sleep, and confidence. Sometimes it replaces real connections.

What makes the biggest difference for me is having a place to go after school and during the summer where I feel safe, supported, and connected to real people.

In VineCorps, I have learned skills that help me manage stress and make good decisions. My first experience with VineCorps was when a friend of mine, who has been a VineCorp member since 9th grade, invited me on a skating trip. But it's not just that; I also became a member of the program because I started to get really interested in enjoying it with them. I love how the staff helps you with certain tasks, and they also give us advice on mental health.

Another thing is that since becoming a member of the VineCorps program, I was able to work with them during the summer. That was also a very unforgettable experience because I also had the opportunity to meet new people.

HB1278 would create a fund to support more programs like mine across Maryland. It connects the problem of social media harms to a real solution — giving young people safe, supportive spaces outside of school.

Not every young person has access to these programs. This bill would help change that.

Please give HB1278 a favorable report so more youth like me can have places to belong, grow, and thrive in real life.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
**Ofir Gomez**  
**Hyattsville Maryland**

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

My name is Paolo and I am a 10th grade student from Prince George Country. I am involved in Vinecorps. I am asking you to support HB1278. Young people of my generation spend a lot of time online. Social media is fun and useful, but overwhelming. It often affects mental health, sleep, and confidence. It often replaces real-life connections like the friendships we make.

What sets me apart is having a place to go after school and during the summer, where I feel relaxed, have fun, and make new friends.

In my program VineCorps, I have:

- Made new friends
- Learned new skills I never thought I'd learn
- Stayed active and engaged
- Had fun during after-school workshops and field trips

The program helped me improve my confidence. When I first came to the United States and started at this school, I didn't have any friends. Vinecorps gave me more confidence so I could make friends and form good connections.

Social media has made people constantly connected to technology and less likely to socialize, leading to trust issues. Vinecorps has made people within its community feel safe and secure, knowing they will always have its support. Vinecorps made many young people feel safe.

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Not every young person has access to these programs. This bill would help change that.

Please give HB1278 a favorable report so more youth like me can have places to belong, grow, and thrive in real life.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely

Paolo, Temple Hills MD

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

My name is Rolando, and I am a 10th grade student from Prince George's County Bladensburg. I am involved in VineCorps. I am asking you to support HB1278.

Young people in my generation spend a lot of time online. Social media can be fun and helpful, but it can also be overwhelming. Many of us see content that affects our mental health, sleep, and confidence. Sometimes it replaces real connections.

What makes the biggest difference for me is having a place to go after school and during the summer where I feel safe, supported, and connected to real people.

A great experience I had at Vinecorps is that in this club I've met some really nice people who have helped me improve my English and overcome my fear of speaking in public in English. Also, the excursions they organize are really fun and entertaining, and I've made a lot of new friends here at Vinecorp, which is why I really enjoy the program.

HB1278 would create a fund to support more programs like mine across Maryland. It connects the problem of social media harms to a real solution — giving young people safe, supportive spaces outside of school.

Not every young person has access to these programs. This bill would help change that.

Please give HB1278 a favorable report so more youth like me can have places to belong, grow, and thrive in real life.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Rolando

Prince George's County Bladensburg.

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

My name is Sara Sanchez, and I am a parent of 15 and 17 year-old children in Prince Georges County. I am writing to ask you to support HB1278.

Like many families, we are navigating the realities of social media. 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 has made the biggest difference for our family is access to [afterschool/summer/mentoring/youth program]. These programs give my child:

- Safe, supervised time after school
- Positive adult role models
- Real friendships and teamwork experiences
- Physical activity and structured routines
- Confidence and skills that build resilience

My children look forward to participating in all of these activities. My 17 year old started high school very shy and anxious. After joining Vinecorps and benefiting from all of the above, I see a huge difference in his confidence levels, communication skills and his self expression. I love that he spends time away from his video games and gets to build his social skills with friends and mentors. He also improved his D average from the 9th grade to an A-B average in his 11th grade year. For my 15 year old, his confidence improved tremendously, he feels that he is in space of belonging because of all the relationships he was able to build in the program. This program has helped him build his best self.

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.

HB1278 creates a dedicated fund to support community-based youth development programs across Maryland. 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, 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,  
Sara Sanchez

Bowie, Prince Georges County.