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FREDERICK

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

The Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins
Maryland House of Delegates
131 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the Establishment of the Maryland Positive Youth Development Commission and Fund HB1278

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and members of the Committee,

The City of Frederick supports House Bill 1278 and its efforts to establish the Maryland Positive Youth Development Commission and Fund within the Maryland State Department of Education.

HB1278 represents a meaningful step forward in recognizing the importance of community-based positive youth development as a core delinquency prevention strategy. A key strength of this bill is its recognition that prevention must occur before youth reach a crisis point or system involvement. Community-based programming builds protective and compensatory experiences that support youth resilience, belonging, and increase stability.

Since October 2025, Frederick has already received more than 200 referrals for youth ages 14–24 experiencing barriers related to education, employment, housing instability, mental health, and family challenges. The City's RISE Reengagement Program functions as a coordinated pathway supporting youth through prevention, stabilization, and reconnection. Several components of RISE's work directly align with HB1278 and its emphasis on positive youth development, such as youth-centered programming occurring outside school hours and prevention-focused programming designed to build protective factors.

One of the bills' many strong points is its focus on outcomes. Outcome measures should reflect both traditional metrics (school re-enrollment, employment connection) and relational indicators such as belonging, engagement, and youth-reported confidence. Local jurisdictions will benefit from having clear guidance on reporting expectations while being granted flexibility in program design.

Overall, the City of Frederick urges your support for House Bill 1278 and its efforts to expand youth development and engagement opportunities.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Connor