



**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 Victoria Wegener, and I am a Partner at Mainspring Consulting, working as a education policy expert in Montgomery County. I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB1278.

HB1278 establishes the Maryland Positive Youth Development Commission and a dedicated, nonlapsing Positive Youth Development Fund within MSDE to support community-based programming for youth birth–25.

The bill reflects what public health and education leaders increasingly recognize: excessive and unregulated social media use is associated with increased risks to youth mental health, including anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, and social isolation. At the same time, Maryland lacks a dedicated, sustainable funding mechanism for prevention through youth development programming outside school hours.

Research consistently shows that protective factors — consistent adult relationships, structured time, skill-building, and opportunities for belonging — reduce risk behaviors and strengthen resilience. Afterschool programs, summer learning, mentoring, and community-based initiatives provide exactly these conditions.

Maryland continues to rank in the bottom tier nationally for afterschool access, despite strong parent demand. Without safe, supervised environments, many youth default to screens as childcare.

Across Maryland, we have seen data that shows the powerful impact of afterschool and summer learning with young people helping them gain durable skills such as teamwork, communication, and workforce readiness. We also know that parents support public funding of afterschool across the political spectrum. As a parent I can attest to the positive impact afterschool programs have had on my child – going from science clubs in grade school to now a graduating senior in mechanical engineering at the University of Maryland College Park – her journey has been supported by afterschool and summer learning opportunities along the way.

HB1278 is a smart prevention strategy. It links potential social media litigation revenue to long-term youth well-being, ensures funds are supplemental, and prioritizes meaningful youth engagement in program design.

As an education advocate, I strongly support policies that invest upstream in prevention rather than downstream in crisis response. HB1278 does precisely that.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,  
Victoria Wegener, Partner