



**WIDE ANGLE
YOUTH MEDIA**

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March 9, 2026

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 **Susan Malone**, and I am **the Executive Director at Wide Angle Youth Media**, serving **Baltimore City youth ages 10–26** through **media arts programming during afterschool and summer, and year round workforce 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 **Wide Angle Youth Media**, we see these protective factors every day. **Through hands-on filmmaking and digital storytelling programs**, young people work with professional teaching artists and mentors to create films, designs, photographs, and animations about issues that matter in their lives and communities. In the process, they

build confidence, critical thinking skills, and supportive peer and adult relationships that extend beyond the classroom.

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 **Wide Angle Youth Media** and the youth we serve in **Baltimore City and across the Baltimore region**, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB1278.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Susan Malone', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Susan Malone
Executive Director
Wide Angle Youth Media