



Advocates for Children and Youth improves the lives and experiences of Maryland's children and youth by advancing policies and programs across multiple issue areas that tackle racial disparities and improve outcomes to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Testimony before the Budget and Tax Committee

In SUPPORT

Senate Bill 229 – Baltimore City - Summer Youth Employment - Funding and Incentives

February 6, 2019

Advocates for Children and Youth supports Senate Bill 229, which would provide dedicated funding for the Maryland Summer Youth Connection Program in Baltimore City. Summer youth employment programs are an important tool in providing pathways to opportunity for our youth. Baltimore's YouthWorks Program connects thousands of young people between the ages of 14 and 21 to summer jobs with private, nonprofit, and city and state government employers. Because the youth work in a variety of industries, they have the opportunity to gain not only basic workforce experience but often career-specific skills. This experience not only opens doors, but expands horizons, as youth are exposed to careers that they might not have considered an option before participating in the summer.

In addition, summer youth employment programs ensure young people have a safe, productive way to spend their time and earn a living. For many of our youth living in under-resourced communities, these jobs are not about earning spending money but rather are essential for helping their families put food on the table and pay the bills.

Advocates for Children and Youth has heard from young people across the City that access to employment and career opportunities is among their top concerns. Just this past December we co-hosted a youth forum in East Baltimore, and the young panelists who shared their ideas and their frustrations spoke at length about the need for both workforce training and access to employment. This need is also proven as year after year the City's program cannot provide enough positions for all the interested applicants, despite ongoing investment from businesses and foundations.

We also strongly support the requirement that the MTA provides free bus passes to youth participating in the program. Transportation is a chronic barrier to opportunities for people of all ages in the City, and has been highlighted as a concern by YouthWorks participants in the past. Easing this burden is an important way to ensure that the youth have a supportive, positive experience.

Senate Bill 229 would provide a much-needed funding boost to support youth employment in the City. We urge a favorable vote.

