

Transforming Youth Outcomes through Restorative Justice:

*A Summative Report by the Howard County
Youth Engagement Strategies (Y.E.S.)
Committee (Executive Order #2025-05)*

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I. Introduction

The Youth Engagement Strategies (YES) Council was established through Executive Order 2025-05 by Howard County Executive Calvin Ball on March 31, 2025, to strengthen and align the County's collective efforts to support, engage, and empower young people. Recognizing that nearly one-third of Howard County residents are under the age of 25, this initiative affirms the County's commitment to fostering a safe, inclusive, and opportunity-rich environment for all youth.

The Council's charge includes identifying youth-serving resources, recommending strategies to prevent youth violence and disengagement, promoting collaboration across systems, and advancing a vision of holistic youth wellness. Throughout 2025, the YES Council has convened youth leaders, educators, service providers, and community organizations to assess existing programs and identify opportunities for deeper coordination and shared accountability among systems.

At the heart of this work is a shared belief that Howard County must move from a reactive and punitive culture toward one that prioritizes prevention, healing, belonging, and connection for our young people. This requires proactive investments in young people and families, not just as a matter of compassion but as a matter of community well-being and safety.

Many youth systems today were built around compliance, punishment, and narrowly defined services; approaches that often fail to address the interconnected realities of young people's lives. These models can overlook trauma, disengagement, and the structural barriers that shape behavior and opportunity. Restorative approaches offer a different path, one grounded in relationships, healing, and shared community accountability. Youth need communities with systems that understand their realities and respond with care rather than control. By learning from restorative justice models, communities can better understand the root causes of challenges, respond to harm in ways that strengthen rather than isolate, and create environments where young people feel supported, respected, and able to thrive.

The Council's guiding framework centers on the creation of a restorative community, one that values relationships over punishment, accountability over blame, and collective responsibility over isolation. Models from Oakland, California and Chicago, Illinois demonstrate the transformative power of embedding restorative justice across schools and community organizations. These communities have shown measurable reductions in school suspensions, youth arrests, and violence through intentional investment in prevention, healing, and inclusion.

Moving Forward

Ultimately, this report represents more than a summary of activities. It marks the beginning of a culture shift; one that redefines how the County views, values, and invests in its young people.

The YES Council envisions a Howard County where:

- Youth engagement is a shared responsibility across every system
- Prevention is prioritized over punishment
- Community voices drive strategies and solutions

- Restorative justice is not a one-time initiative, but a fully supported, resourced, and institutionalized culture
- Every young person has equitable access to the resources, relationships, and opportunities needed to thrive

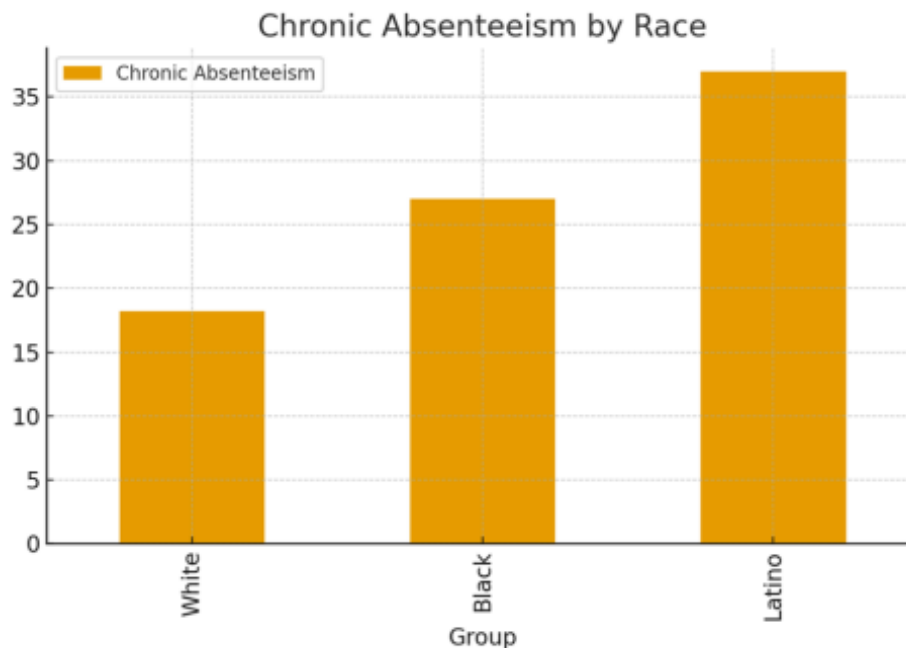
We offer this report with the ancestral and indigenous tradition of planting seeds today, not for one's own consumption, but for the generations to follow. Though we may not see the fruit of our labor immediately, we act with intention, nurturing a future where every young person is valued, supported, and equipped to thrive, ensuring that generations to come will flourish.

II. Data

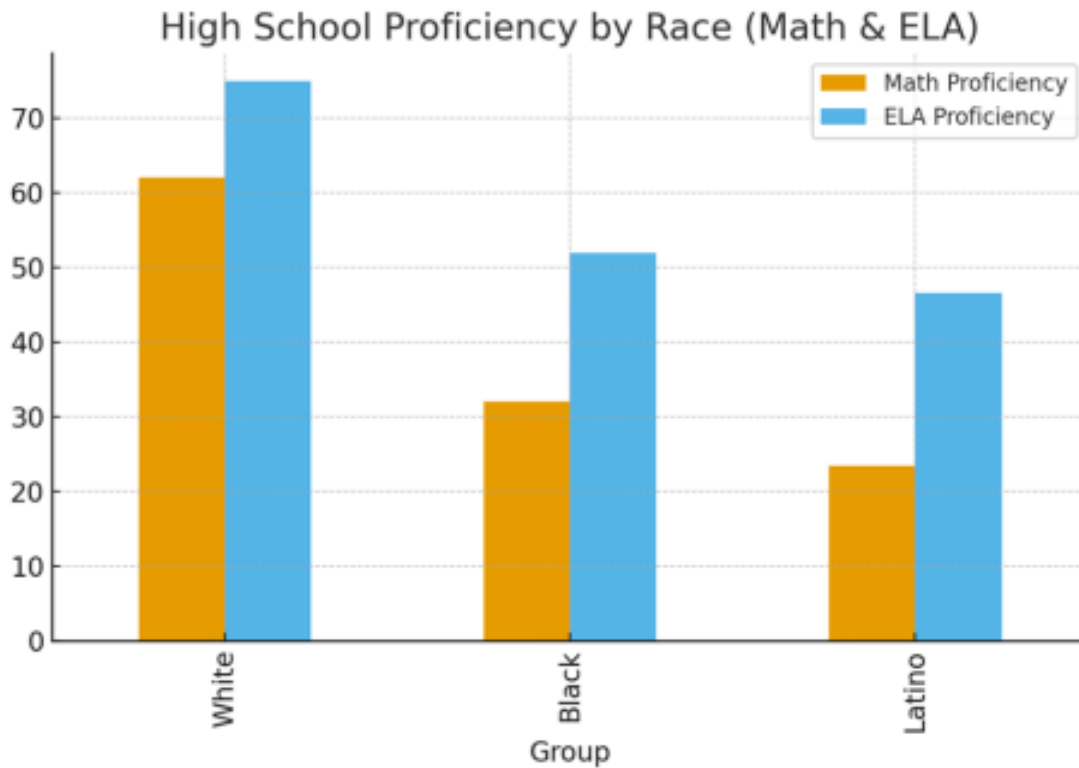
The YES Council was able to utilize a variety of different data sets to develop this report. Additionally, Howard County Government engaged the Schaefer Center for Public Policy (Schaefer Center) at The University of Baltimore (UBalt) to conduct a program evaluation of its youth engagement efforts. The evaluation was designed to identify service gaps and opportunities to strengthen youth engagement across the County. While some data is highlighted below, we also would like to encourage a full review of the final report and data submission from the University of Baltimore.

Data Highlights

Howard County, Maryland, is consistently ranked as one of the wealthiest and “happiest” counties in the nation, and its school system boasts impressive overall outcomes — a graduation rate of **93.5%**, a dropout rate of **3.6%**, and a chronic absenteeism rate of **24.6%**. However, when the data are disaggregated by race, significant inequities emerge that reveal a very different reality for many students of color.

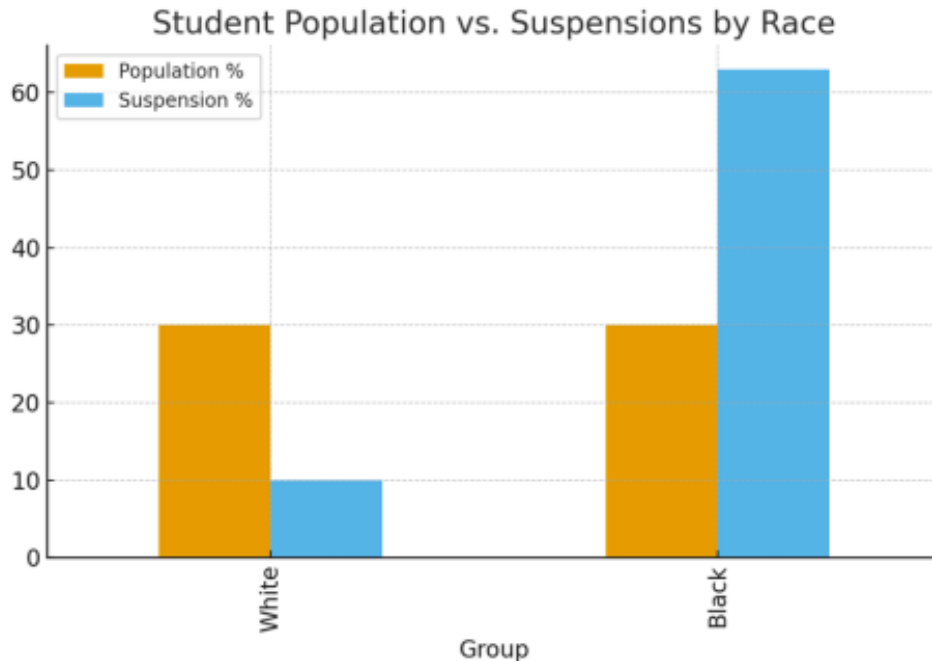


Academic achievement varies sharply by race. In high school mathematics, **62.1% of white students are proficient**, compared to only **32.1% of Black students** and **23.5% of Latino students**. A similar pattern exists in English Language Arts: **75% of white students demonstrate proficiency**, compared with **52% of Black students** and **46.6% of Latino students**. Students of color also experience greater school instability; Black and Latino students move between schools at rates nearly **10 percentage points higher** than their white peers.



Chronic absenteeism — a key early warning indicator for academic disengagement — is also racially disproportionate. While **18.2% of white students** are chronically absent, the rates jump to **27% for Black students** and nearly **37% for Latino students**.

The disparities intensify when examining suspensions and discipline. Black students represent **30% of enrollment** but account for **63% of all suspensions**, while white students also represent **30% of enrollment** yet make up only **10% of suspensions**. This means a Black student in Howard County Public Schools is **six times more likely to be suspended** than a white student.



These inequities contribute to what national researchers describe as the **preschool-to-prison pipeline** — the systemic funneling of students from learning environments into the juvenile justice system. Research shows that just **one suspension before high school graduation triples a student’s likelihood of entering the juvenile justice system**. Once students fall behind academically due to absences or suspensions, they are more likely to drop out, and youth who do not finish high school are far more likely to be incarcerated. Nationally, **Black youth are incarcerated at five times the rate of white youth**.

Locally, juvenile crime data reinforce this trend. Between FY2021 and FY2025, Howard County experienced a **consistent and significant increase in juvenile cases**, particularly misdemeanors, which grew **93% over five years**. Felonies and crimes of violence also increased, with a notable spike in FY2024.

At the same time, the cost of relying on punishment over support is staggering: it costs **\$241 per day to incarcerate a young person**, compared with **only \$75 per day** to support them in a community-based, wraparound diversion program.

Despite the magnitude of need, we know what works. Research is clear: young people thrive when they receive behavioral health supports, strong relationships, wraparound services, and educators and law enforcement trained to respond with care rather than punishment. Children who are struggling need connection, not exclusion — and data show that diversion programs are both more effective and more cost-efficient.

Howard County’s challenge is not a lack of student potential — it is a lack of equitable opportunity and response. Our systems must stop choosing **fingerprints over finger-paint and handcuffs over diplomas**.

III. Guiding Beliefs

Throughout its work, the YES Council identified key themes and beliefs that guided the development of this report. We believe these to be the foundation for building a restorative and sustainable youth engagement ecosystem.

1. We cannot blame the community for system responsibilities.

Communities are often asked to fill gaps created by systemic inequities, yet they are not responsible for maintaining the structures that perpetuate them. True accountability requires that public institutions—schools, government agencies, and law enforcement, examine and reform their policies and practices to meet community needs rather than shifting the burden to families and grassroots organizations.

2. We must prioritize preventive investment over reactive investment.

Too often, resources are mobilized only after crises occur. By redirecting funds and attention toward early intervention, mentorship, and mental health supports, the County can reduce long-term costs associated with violence, disengagement, and incarceration. Prevention is not a luxury; it is a strategic necessity.

3. This is the responsibility of all systems, not a few.

Youth wellness cannot be siloed within schools or youth-serving nonprofits. Every sector—public safety, housing, recreation, workforce development, and health, has a role in shaping conditions for young people to thrive. Cross-system collaboration and shared responsibility and accountability are essential to sustainable impact. We must ask for all our County Departments and systems to identify their interconnection within youth wellness and develop strategies to impact our youth needing the most support.

4. Howard County is resource-rich, but investment alignment and intentional collaboration is critical.

The County has a wealth of organizations, programs, and expertise dedicated to youth. However, duplication, fragmentation, and lack of coordination limit their collective effectiveness. Strategic alignment and collaborative funding models can ensure that existing resources reach those who need them most.

5. Creating a restorative community is the ultimate goal.

A restorative community is one that centers relationships, empathy, and shared responsibility. It seeks to heal harm rather than punish it, to connect rather than isolate, and create a culture of care and belonging. Restorative justice is an Indigenous philosophy that emphasizes the importance of being in right relationship with one another. More than a response to discipline, restorative justice can offer a cultural framework for how a community defines justice, safety, and wellness. This means engaging in the tough conversations to examine how racism, injustice, and inequities impact the families, and particularly the youth of Howard County. It also means taking a community approach and the intentional investment of time and resources. Only with a foundational understanding, can we then work to transform our policies and practices to create a restorative culture that embraces all who reside here.

IV. Learning from Other Communities

Nationally, Oakland, California and Chicago, Illinois stand as leading examples of how restorative justice frameworks can transform youth outcomes when supported by intentional policy, sustained investment, strong community partnerships, and collective activism and advocacy. These cities also reveal a critical truth: without deep and ongoing commitment from school systems, local governments, and the business community, restorative justice efforts cannot succeed or be sustained. This commitment includes financial investment, a mindset shift, collective will, and long-term policy initiatives.

Oakland, California – Moving Toward Building a Restorative City

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) became one of the first in the nation to implement districtwide restorative justice in 2017. Due to alarmingly high disproportionate rates of exclusionary discipline of Black and Latine student, community advocates and organizations pushed for restorative circles, peer mediation, relationship-building, and healing-centered conflict resolution across schools and neighborhoods.

Over time, the results were significant: reductions in suspensions and expulsions, improved school climate, and increases in student attendance and engagement.

Through an anti-racist, anti-bias lens, seeking to shift institutions, Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY) played a central role by offering training, facilitating community circles, and helping schools and city agencies foster healing, accountability, and connection. This broad, citywide commitment positioned Oakland as a national model showing how public institutions, school districts, and grassroots organizations can embed restorative values into the fabric of a community, from classrooms to juvenile justice systems, to neighborhood coalitions.

Oakland's story also offers a cautionary tale - momentum and outcomes become difficult to sustain without long-term policy commitments, consistent investment, and ongoing institutional and system-wide support.

Chicago, Illinois – Investing in Healing-Centered Community Systems

Chicago has embraced restorative justice as part of its broader commitment to community safety, youth wellness, and educational equity. These efforts emerged from strong community leadership, state and citywide legislation, and development of restorative justice hubs located in neighborhoods most impacted by violence and systemic inequity.

These hubs are not general harm-reduction centers; they are specifically focused on healing and building power within communities impacted by violence, trauma, and systemic inequities.

Restorative justice hubs provide:

- Safe, community-driven spaces
- Mentoring, conflict resolution, and healing-centered practices
- Supports for survivors of violence and individuals at risk
- Reentry assistance, violence interruption, and mediation
- Connections to mental health care, housing, workforce development, and other stabilizing resources

These hubs were built from the ground up by community members; centering the voices of those most directly impacted by violence and disinvestment. They reinforce an essential truth: violence cannot be addressed solely through punitive systems; it must be addressed through community-led solutions, supported, not undermined by institutions.

The Chicago model shows that community-led responses to violence can be powerful, but their sustainability and impact depend on institutional commitment, policy alignment, and long-term investment.

Shared Lessons from Oakland and Chicago

Together, Oakland and Chicago demonstrate that the sustainability of restorative justice requires more than programs or passionate advocates.

It requires:

- Investment in staffing, training, infrastructure, and community partnerships
- A shift in mindset from punitive punishment to healing, accountability, and transformation
- Collective-will across agencies, organizations, and communities
- Policy initiatives that embed restorative justice and healing-centered approaches into everyday practice
- Recognition that violence must be addressed through community-led structures, supported by but not dependent on systems

And most importantly: if school systems and local governments are not fully committed, (financially, structurally, and philosophically) restorative justice efforts will not work.

Implications for Howard County

For Howard County, these models serve as both inspiration and caution. They affirm that systemic change is possible when institutions share responsibility for youth outcomes, when prevention is prioritized over punishment, and when community voice guides decision-making. But they also show that early progress can stall without firm institutional backing, policy alignment, and clear investment.

The YES Council's vision for a restorative Howard County draws directly from these local lessons while tailoring approaches to the County's unique strengths, demographics, and opportunities for collaboration.

Similarly, Maryland's statewide efforts to advance restorative justice in education provide a strong foundation for local implementation. Legislation supporting restorative justice approaches in schools demonstrates a broader cultural shift; one that Howard County is well-positioned to lead through a multi-system approach with practices grounded in Indigenous wisdom and traditions. With proper financial investment, Howard County has the opportunity to *transform youth outcomes through a restorative community*.

V. Opportunities

Howard County is well-positioned to become a model for restorative and youth-centered innovation. The County's diversity, organizational capacity, and strong sense of community responsibility provide a powerful foundation for transformation. The following opportunities outline actionable steps for collective progress.

1. Community Commitment

Building a restorative community requires the active participation of every sector, including elected officials, businesses, nonprofits, educators, community organizations, public agencies, and residents. Each has a role in fostering environments where young people are valued, supported, and included. The YES Council recommends that the County develop an official stakeholder training and commitment framework outlining what it looks like to build a community based on restorative justice principles. This framework would:

- Provide ongoing professional learning for County staff, school system leaders, and service providers related, but not limited to: understanding restorative justice, anti-racism, adultism, nonviolent communication, and community building.
- Offer community-wide training sessions for organizations and businesses to align practices with restorative principles.
- Establish a shared pledge or set of community values that reflect the County's commitment to youth well-being.

2. Cultural Transformation

A restorative Howard County requires cultural as well as structural change. This means:

- Supporting systems and institutions in acknowledging and addressing the harm they have caused—particularly to Black, Brown, and marginalized communities.
- Providing spaces and resources for families to heal from intergenerational harm and systemic exclusion.
- Encouraging a culture of innovation, where County agencies and partners are empowered to try new approaches without fear of failure.

3. Programmatic Opportunities

The County can amplify impact by setting clear expectations for organizations and programs receiving public funding focused on youth. Specifically:

- Establish standards and accountability measures for all youth-serving organizations receiving funds from or through the County.
- Equip communities with grassroots organizing and advocacy skills to increase civic engagement and leadership.
- Develop a "History of Howard County" curriculum rooted in African American history and including other marginalized communities, ensuring a shared understanding of local equity challenges.

- Create guidelines and training for businesses and community hubs to become welcoming spaces for youth—fostering a network of trusted, youth-friendly environments across the County.
- Host youth-led events that center their voice, leadership, and creativity in shaping community priorities.

4. Training Opportunities

Training and education are critical components when implementing strategies aimed at improving outcomes for historically marginalized youth and their families. The YES Council strongly supports:

- Conducting a scan of all youth serving institutions and organizations within the County
Assessing community needs to ensure recommended training aligns with their identified priorities
Surveying organizations with the capacity to provide training to young people, adults, and system professionals
- Matching youth serving institutions and organizations throughout the County to training providers
- Developing any training necessary to fill gaps not met by providers

5. Government Support

Howard County Government can strengthen its role as a convener and champion of youth well-being by:

- Identifying and committing to shared community values that place youth at the center of policy and budgeting decisions.
- Identifying opportunities for alignment and expansion of free programs, healing opportunities, education and outreach, and advocacy with County Offices and Departments including, but not limited to, the Department of Community Resources and Services, Department of Recreation and Parks, Office of Human Rights and Equity, and Office of Workforce Development
- Advocating for state-level policy alignment and funding that supports restorative justice, prevention-based programming, and youth engagement strategies.

6. Future of the YES Council

The YES Council recommends continued County investment in its mission beyond 2025, including:

- Reviewing national models for youth violence prevention and intervention, such as those in Los Angeles and Oakland, California and Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- Expanding youth representation within the Council and across County boards and commissions.
- Institutionalizing the YES Council as a permanent advisory body to monitor implementation, accountability, and progress.

VI. Strategy Recommendations

The YES Council identified several strategies that can strengthen Howard County’s restorative, prevention-centered approach to youth engagement. While these ideas reflect best practices from national models, address systemic gaps, and ensure equitable access to resources for all youth and families, the foundation to all of these strategies are developing opportunities for communities impacted by systematic harm to have input into the process and final product. Through the process of authentic community voice, the YES Council offers the following strategies:

1. Violence Prevention and Harm Intervention

- Emergency Response Network / Harm Intervention Program:
Develop a County-supported program modeled on initiatives such as Institute for Nonviolence Chicago and Safe Streets Baltimore. This program would deploy trained responders to mediate conflicts, prevent retaliation, and connect youth and families to supportive services, focusing on reducing harm before law enforcement involvement is required.
- Restorative Justice Implementation:
Expand restorative justice practices across schools, community spaces, and juvenile justice systems. Prioritize relationship-building, community connection, and trust based on the needs of those most affected by systematic harm. Only after those relationships are built and strengthened should restorative justice be used to address incidents of harm.

2. Housing and Tenant Rights

- Tenant Rights Training for Landlords and Newcomers:
Require landlords to provide all residents—particularly newcomers—with information about tenant rights, available resources, and community supports. Develop standardized training modules for property owners to ensure consistent knowledge and access.

3. Newcomer Welcoming Committee / Ambassadors Program:

Create a blueprint to support families new to Howard County, including orientation programs, mentorship, and connection to critical resources. Collaborate with housing authorities, school systems, and community partners to ensure families are integrated into the community upon arrival.

- MOUs with Housing and Property Owners:
Formalize agreements between the Department of Housing and Community Development, Howard County Housing Commission, Howard County Public School System, and property owners to:
 - Facilitate referrals for newcomer families into supportive programs.
 - Align low-income housing assignments with youth engagement programs.
 - Encourage participation in family orientation events and food/resource drives.

4. Economic and Workforce Development

- County-Funded Workforce Initiatives for Youth:
Address gaps left by federal programs by creating a local Job Corps-style initiative for youth. Provide training, mentorship, and paid employment opportunities that connect young people to meaningful career pathways.
- County-Funded AmeriCorps / MD-Corps Initiative:
Develop a County-sponsored service corps program that engages youth in civic, educational, and community service projects. Offer stipends or mini-grants to support participation and ensure equitable access.

5. Funding and Resource Allocation

- Mini-Grants and Stipends for Youth Participation:
Ensure youth engagement is not limited by economic barriers. Provide small grants or stipends to incentivize and compensate youth for their time, leadership, and contributions to programs, councils, and civic initiatives.

6. Reparations Funding from Cannabis Tax Revenue:

The City of Baltimore’s approval of Question G establishes a charter-mandated “Community Reinvestment and Reparations Fund” to receive revenue generated by adult-use cannabis sales and direct those funds exclusively toward communities disproportionately impacted by the War on Drugs. At the state level, the Cannabis Reform Act of 2023 stipulates that 35 % of quarterly adult-use cannabis sales tax revenue be allocated to the “Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund” (CRRF), intended to serve jurisdictions with high rates of past cannabis-possession charges.

Modeled after these examples, Howard County should:

- Establish a County-level “Youth Reporative & Reinvestment Fund” funded by a defined portion of adult-use cannabis tax revenue (or equivalent new revenue streams) to ensure that young people and communities who have been most harmed by systemic inequities benefit directly.
- Institute governance via a commission that includes youth representatives, community members from impacted neighborhoods, and restorative justice practitioners—matching the oversight model used in The City of Baltimore.
- Define investment criteria that directs funds toward youth engagement, workforce development, mentorship, restorative justice programming, newcomer support, and ecosystem alignment (not enforcement or surveillance).
- Require transparent reporting and a “lock-box” status for the fund so money cannot be diverted elsewhere, ensuring sustained investment in communities long past one budget cycle.

By aligning Howard County’s policy with this model, the County can move beyond symbolic investment and operationalize resource allocation in a way consistent with the County’s vision of prevention, equity, and youth-centered wellness.

7. Growth Standards

Implement equity and environmental impact standards for new development projects to ensure they do not harm existing community resources or youth-serving spaces (e.g., preserving green space near schools).

8. Ethnic Studies Requirements

Incorporate ethnic studies curricula into HCPSS and Howard Community College, promoting cultural awareness, belonging, and understanding of historically marginalized Black and Brown populations within Howard County and beyond.

9. Funding Accountability

Require organizations receiving public dollars for programs and activities directed for youth, teens, and families participate in County-led training on youth-engagement, ensuring alignment with Howard County's vision of prevention, equity, belonging, and youth-centered wellness. Build in youth-centered performance and accountability measures that funded organizations are required to abide by.

10. Implement the Racial Equity Task Force Report from 2020

In order to grow from the past and learn from the harms already identified, the County should sufficiently review data and recommendations from the Howard County Racial Equity Task Force, submitted to the County Council on August 2, 2021.

Impact Statement for Policy Recommendations:

Implementing these policies would:

- Reduce youth exposure to violence and increase access to support services.
- Ensure newcomer families are welcomed, informed, and connected to critical resources.
- Create sustainable workforce pathways for young people, while mitigating the impact of federal program cuts.
- Introduce and embed restorative justice principles into County systems, promoting equity, accountability, and long-term community resilience.

VII. Challenges to the Work

While the YES Council's work revealed great promise and strong community commitment, it also illuminated significant barriers that must be addressed for Howard County to fully realize its vision of a restorative and youth-centered community. These challenges reflect both systemic and cultural realities that impact the County's ability to sustain meaningful, long-term change.

1. Policy Barriers

Many of the departments and systems within the county have existing policies that, while well-intentioned, are not aligned with the principles of prevention, equity, and restorative justice. Those policies often focus on compliance, control, or image management rather than addressing the root causes of disengagement and harm. This results in fragmented service delivery and limited flexibility to adapt to the unique needs of young people and families. These policies also support the continuation and exacerbation of the preschool-to-prison pipeline, criminalization and policing of students, and the facilitation of white and European-centered curriculum and activities. Additionally, these policies treat young people as criminals for displaying age-appropriate behavior, creating a record that follows students and creates roadblocks for their future trajectory.

2. Political Will

Transformative change requires courage from leadership. At times, political hesitation and competing priorities have limited the County's ability to act decisively on restorative and preventative strategies. Initiatives that center racial equity, systemic accountability, or youth voice often encounter resistance—not due to lack of evidence, but due to fear of disruption to established norms and power structures.

3. Prioritization of Public Image over Public Well-Being

Howard County's cherished image as a prosperous, high-performing community has become a shield that prevents it from fully confronting the raw realities of inequity, youth violence, and systemic racism and oppression. This misplaced priority ensures service delivery remains fragmented and root causes are left untreated. True progress demands the County center transparency, not image, and authenticity, not optics. If this fundamental shift does not occur, the county risks entrenching disparities and betraying the future of its most vulnerable youth.

4. Challenges of Being a Black-Led Organization in Howard County

Black-led organizations—many of which are doing the most critical, community-based work for our most vulnerable families—often face barriers to recognition, trust, and equitable funding. Despite their deep relationships and cultural competency, these organizations are frequently required to “prove” their legitimacy in ways not demanded of others. This dynamic perpetuates inequities in access to resources and undermines community-driven leadership. Addressing these disparities is essential to building a restorative ecosystem.

VIII. Funding Opportunities

1. Leveraging Existing Resources

Howard County is resource-rich, but resources must be better aligned with community needs. There are opportunities to reallocate existing funds toward youth programs that serve the County's most vulnerable and underserved populations, ensuring that investment follows need, not visibility.

2. Collaboration with the Howard County Economic Development Authority (HCEDA)

The Council recommends exploring a partnership with HCEDA to establish or sustain a Howard County Youth Fund, dedicated to supporting youth-led initiatives, community safety, mentorship, and workforce development.

3. National Funding Opportunities

The County can pursue federal and philanthropic grants aligned with prevention, violence reduction, and restorative justice—including funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and national foundations such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

4. Funding Models to Emulate

Howard County can learn from the Baltimore Children and Youth Fund (BCYF) and similar municipal funding structures that, while not perfect, strive to combine corporate investment, community oversight, and government accountability. These models demonstrate that sustained, youth-focused funding can be both transparent and transformative when guided by community voice and equity principles.

IX. Closing

We start this work by planting seeds today, not for one's own consumption, but for the generations to follow. This requires proactive investment in our most vulnerable young people and their families, not just as a matter of compassion, but as a priority within community well-being and safety. Indigenous people throughout the history of the world have worked to sustain joy in the midst of hardship and oppression. We must take lessons learned from these communities to develop a path forward that includes ensuring are young people have the ability to exercise their power and not remain victims to the will of the systems and communities they find themselves in.

As our community and country continue to develop and advance, there are aspects of racism, systematic inequities, and white supremacy that remain a root cause for the harms experienced by young people. While responsibility cannot be placed on one individual or system, it is key that we expose the opportunity for all stakeholders to accept their contributions and responsibility in creating a community where all our young people, regardless of their demographics, can be successful.

Without long-lasting commitment across every sector of our community, restorative justice efforts cannot succeed or be sustained. There are opportunities for every sector to get involved within the success of our young people.

Our advocacy and non-profit organizations have the opportunity to tell the stories of our communities from the perspective of the most vulnerable. There are a variety of training and advocacy resources that can be used to equip young people and their families with the tools to advocate for themselves in a way that will lead to sustained systematic change.

Our families, have the opportunity to design and develop an environment that meets their unique needs.

Our young people have the opportunity to grow into who they dream of becoming. When our young people with the most challenging experiences can feel that they are a valued member of their community, they will thrive.

We can identify the opportunity to lead the path toward change. We must stay connected to what our community needs as much as we are connected to what our community has to offer. Our community will thrive when individuals work collectively to ensure the success of their most vulnerable population, our young people.

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