

Baltimore City Council



Education, Youth, & Older Adults Committee

Bill: 25-0100

Title: Children and Youth Fund - Updates

Public Testimony

My name is Whitney Ramirez, founder of Diapers 2 Deposits, Financial Literacy, and a current Grassroots Fund grantee with the Baltimore Children and Youth Fund. I am standing in this room for future grantees who don't know my name, who don't even know this hearing is happening, but who deserve a real chance to grow and to serve Baltimore's children with the same hope and determination that brought me here today.

BCYF's Grassroots Fund was built for them—for small, community-rooted youth organizations with modest budgets but big visions for their neighborhoods. It offers multi-year grants, typically around \$50,000 per year for five years, plus capacity-building support to help new and small organizations become stable, sustainable, and strong.

Because of multi-year grassroots funding, we have been able to bring hands-on financial-literacy programming to students across Baltimore City and even take young people on a financial field trip to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York—an experience most of them never imagined they would have. That is what real opportunity looks like, and that is what is at stake for the next wave of grassroots grantees if you lock them to last year's budget.

When a rigid, expenditure-based cap pushes those grants down to match an early, under-resourced year, it doesn't reward responsibility—it punishes smallness. This undermines the Grassroots Fund's core purpose: to close the long-standing gaps that have kept community-rooted youth organizations undercapitalized and under-supported, even as they do the hardest work on the ground.

So I am asking you today: do not limit these grants to last year's hardship. Remove this cap, or at least redesign it so early-stage grassroots organizations can receive true growth funding with strong oversight. Because as written, this policy tells the very organizations that have survived on hope, volunteer labor, and sacrifice that they are only entitled to the size of their struggle, not the scale of their potential,

December 10, 2025

Baltimore City Council
Baltimore City Hall
100 Holiday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

Re: Written Testimony, ArchiNext Inc., Baltimore City Youth Fund, Grass Roots Fund

Dear Baltimore City Council Representatives,

My name is Cris Flack, a Baltimore resident and Co-Founder, ArchiNext Inc. and from our youth, leadership, teachers and families of ArchiNext Inc., I would like to extend our deepest gratitude and thanks to the Baltimore City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony reference Baltimore City Youth Fund (BCYF), Bill 25-0100.

As a proud and grateful 2024 awardee of the BCYF Grass Roots fund, the grant award and collaboration with BCYF has become critical to sustaining and growing the vision, objectives and success of ArchiNext Inc. Established in 2021, ArchiNext Inc. is driven by the mission to identify, educate, and train Black and Underserved youth (14-17) from Baltimore City to the field of architecture, key software and technology, and the historical significance of Black's in architecture.. ArchiNext Inc. serves as an after-school program to further enhance youth learning experiences, creating a competitive educational and professional edge for our youth.

Six (6) students who recently graduated from BDS and completed ArchiNext Inc. curriculum have just begun baccalaureate degree studies at top architectural schools in America. A total of 38 students enrolled to continue their journey to becoming certified architects. In an industry where out of 130,000 certified architects only 2% identify as Black or African America, ArchiNext Inc. is truly making a difference in producing the next generation of talented Black architects.

BCYF Grass Roots Funds' multi-year commitment to ArchiNext Inc. assists in keeping operations efficient, driving growth, and strengthening opportunities for success for our youth. This commitment of course comes at a time where local, state and federal funds are scarce or unattainable.

During the time of our collaboration, BCYF staff continue to be approachable, knowledgeable, and consistently strive to meet the needs and requests of their numerous grantees. ArchiNext Inc. leadership wishes to acknowledge BCYF's efforts and encourages the ongoing refinement of BCYF processes to ensure funding is distributed

timely and consistently. This will enable awardees to continue their vital work, supporting opportunities and enhancing the lives of the youth and families we serve.

In closing and with great gratitude, ArchiNext Inc. leadership would like to thank the residents and taxpayers for funding BCYF and creating this real opportunity to ensure the success of ArchiNext youth and the many other youth represented by other BCYF grantees.

I appreciate the Baltimore City Council for allowing me to provide this written testimony and for holding these critical hearings regarding BCYF.

Gratefully

Cris Flack

Founder

ArchiNext



202-215-5030



cris@archinextinc.org



<https://www.archinextinc.org>



3030 Greenmount Ave, Ste. 300

"Education in the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world"

Nelson Mandela



Meeting Name: Education, Youth, and Older Adults Committee, December 18th

Ordinance: 25-0100; Baltimore Children and Youth Fund.

My name is Jack Boyson. I have been a resident of City's District 14 since 1996. Professionally, I am a former contracted program performance auditor of USAID's positive youth development/youth workforce development programs most recently in Ukraine, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Jordan, and more, for 10 years. I am also was a former programs director of the International Youth Foundation for 18 years and a former teacher and university professor for 24 years both here in the US and in South America. For more information on my background, see Jack Boyson, Baltimore, at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jack-boyson-2702bb59/>

My testimony:

Originally, I applauded the City's efforts under former Mayor Young to establish the Baltimore Children and Youth Fund and use taxpayers' funding to expand and support greater programming and services for the City's children and youth while strengthening the nonprofits serving them.

However recently, I have been concerned about coverage in the local media regarding BCYF's operations and impact. My concerns have centered around what appears to me to a general lack of transparency regarding the vetting of its grantees, the grantees' capacity to manage funding from BCYF, lack of verified reporting of each grantees' outputs, outcomes, impacts, and periodic audits and much more.

I strongly believe, given that the source of BCYF's funding is from taxpayers, that both BCYF and its grantees should have **annual** programmatic performance reviews and audits by qualified external professions to measure progress and impact of BCYF's programming. Annual reviews based on my experience, to minimize/avoid unallowable expenditures and lack of documentation of achievements over an extended period of time resulting in a waste of taxpayers' money.

In keeping with an effort to enhance BCYF's transparency and accountability, the following is a list of 16 starter questions I would like City Council to ask about BCYF's operations that would help me and my fellow citizens as a taxpayers have greater confidence in BCYF's ability to improve the condition and prospects of Baltimore City's children and youth

(1) What is BCYF's grantee selection process? Please describe. Is the application process open, or are any grantees pre-selected? If the latter is so, on what basis? Describe.

(2) What is BCYF's process for vetting its potential grantees? What aspects are included in the vetting process? For example:

- clear and comprehensive descriptions of child and youth friendly services to be provided;
- proof of current nonprofit status at the state and federal levels;
- organizational bylaws;
- list of board of directors and the organizations they represent;
- adequacy of staffing levels and their competencies;
- formal monitoring and evaluation systems that include measurable indicators to track and measure performance and impact on participants;
- periodic financial audits and whether by BCYF or external auditors;
- accuracy of recording keeping and accessibility for review; etc.

(3) What information does BCYF require in its formal grant agreement with child and youth serving nonprofits? Please describe.

(4) Does BCYF have prohibitions in place against making grants to other organizations affiliated with members of its Board of Directors and or their family members, staff and/or their family members, City employees and/or their family members. If not, why not?

(5) What is BCYF's criteria for rejecting an application and how accessible is the criteria available to the public?

(6) What are BCYF's protocols for monitoring and evaluating the performance and effectiveness of its grantees? What means are used for verification? What M&E frameworks does BCYF require grantees to use:

- goals and objectives with indicators and specified means for verification;
- outcome logic model (i.e., inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact) with indicators and means for verification;
- or some other framework (describe).
- if none are required, why not?

(7) Does BCYF conduct periodic program performance reviews and financial audits with grantees on site? If so, how often? If not, why not?

(8) What are BCYF's procedures for dealing with grantees that lapse/fall short of compliance with BCYF signed grant agreements and tracking and reporting requirements?

(9) What technical assistance does BCYF provide to grantees to improve their compliance? Describe.

(10) How many grantees typically need technical assistance to comply with BCYF's grantmaking requirements? What programmatic, financial, and monitoring and evaluation aspects are they most likely to need technical assistance? Describe.

(11) Does BCYF conduct samplings of children and youth participants of grantees to verify attendance and participation levels, identify and verify program impacts on them, and their satisfaction levels with the programming and services they received that are funded by BCYF?

(12) What allocation, monitoring and evaluation, tracking and record keeping procedures does BCYF use in funding the City's YouthWorks program? Is the YouthWorks program obligated to report back to BCYF on how it used the funding, including:

- number and names of organizations employing youth;
- starting and completion rates of young people participating in the summer employment period;
- number of young people participating and completing life and employability skills training;
- monitoring and evaluation of YouthWorks Programming;
- satisfaction assessments of youth at the end of their employment period on what's working and what could be better.
- if not, why not since BCYF is a major funding source for the youth employment program.

(13) What is the ratio between BCFY's administrative costs and its grantmaking to nonprofits? Similarly, what is the budget to staff ratio currently? And what is the norm in similar grant making organizations? See the Maryland Philanthropy Network for a comparative analysis.

(14) How often are external audits of BCYF finances conducted? Are they are on a yearly basis for accountability sake and to minimize unallowable expenditures over an extended periods of time? If not, why not?

(15) In its financial audits, has BCFY had any unallowable expenditures according its charter? If not, should there be expenditures by BCYF that are unallowable? If so, what would they be? List.

(16) How compliant is BCFY with Baltimore City, State, and IRS financial reporting requirements? If it is not, why not? Explain.

I understand that the City Council is considering conducting audits of BCYF every three years. I recommend that the City Council authorize an immediate baseline performance and financial audit of BCYF to determine what is working presently and what could be better. And to ensure compliance with any needed improvements, that another audit be conducted one year later, to ensure any requisite improvements in BCYF's procedures are operationalized.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Jack Boyson

Phone: 443 562 1512

Email: jackboyson@yahoo.com

Good afternoon Chair and members of the Committee.

My name is **Angelo Solera**, Founder and Executive Director of **Nuestras Raíces, Inc.**

A Latino community-based cultural nonprofit organization located in **Baltimore's First Council District**, represented by **Councilman Mark Parker**, the sponsor of Council Bill 25-0100.

We are a **BCYF grantee** and operate culturally responsive youth programs through **Casa de la Cultura**, including after-school enrichment arts and cultural education serving Latino and immigrant youth. As a small, grassroots organization, our capacity to serve youth effectively depends on funding structures that are equitable, flexible, and grounded in the lived realities of community-based providers.

We appear today in **strong support of the Baltimore Children & Youth Fund** and its request for community and Board working sessions prior to any further advancement of this bill. While we respect the intent of Council Bill 25-0100, we are concerned that recent amendments were introduced with limited opportunity for meaningful community input. As an organization directly impacted by this legislation—and located in the First District—we believe our voice, and the voices of many similar organizations, should be more fully included in this process.

Accountability and transparency are essential; however, codifying detailed reporting and governance requirements into law—particularly without corresponding resources—creates unintended consequences. For small, culturally specific organizations, unfunded administrative mandates reduce the time and capacity available for direct youth services and risk creating barriers for the very organizations BCYF was designed to support.

BCYF's equity-driven, community-responsive model has worked because it recognizes trust, flexibility, and community expertise as strengths. Altering that model without robust practitioner engagement risks weakening its impact.

We respectfully urge the Council to **pause further action on Council Bill 25-0100** and support BCYF's request for **two community working sessions and one Board working session** with the bill's author. These sessions are not delays—they are necessary steps to ensure this legislation is informed, equitable, and effective.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our lived experience. We look forward to continued dialogue and to working collaboratively to ensure the voices of community-based organizations are meaningfully heard.

Angelo Solera
Founder & Executive Director

NUESTRAS RAÍCES INC.
" OUR ROOTS "

Casa de la Cultura
" House of Culture "

3403 Gough St
Baltimore. Md. 21224

Mobil: 443-224-7592
Office: 443-202-3009
solera.raices@gmail.com

www.nuestrasraicesinc.org

Hello, My name is Terri Holley, and I am the Founder and CEO of Each Teach Inc., a Baltimore based nonprofit advancing gainful employment for marginalized residents. I oppose the proposed bill 25-0100 Children & Youth Fund.

Support from the Baltimore Children and Youth Fund makes our work possible. Through BCYF, we deliver evidence supported, brain-based workforce training grounded in NEAR Science, which helps young people build emotional regulation, obtain employment, retain jobs, and advance as productive, tax paying citizens. This work reduces long term public costs by addressing root causes rather than crises.

While I value accountability and transparency, I am concerned that the proposed legislation, as written, would weaken youth voice on the board and restrict mission critical investments like capacity building and training that small, grassroots organizations rely on to be effective.

I urge the Council to preserve strong youth representation and the flexibility that allows BCYF to function as a true backbone organization for Baltimore's youth serving ecosystem. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Terri Holley

[Pronouns:](#) She/Her

Founder & CEO

Call/Text: 443-823-8584

Email: Terri.Holley@eachteach.org

Each Teach, Inc.

501c3 nonprofit organization EIN# 84-2432081 | Maryland Gold Star Charitable Organization #49629

Each Teach Community Ventures, LLC.

For-profit social enterprise EIN# 99-1168907 | SBR Certification# SB24-055541 | VSBE Certification #VB24-057196 | Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB)

3030 Greenmount Ave

Suite 270

Baltimore, MD 21218

Send tax-deductible charitable donations: pay.eachteach.org



www.EachTeach.org | [Facebook](#)

From: Jacob Israel Cordón Chilton

Date: December 17, 2025

Subject: Letter of Support for Bill 25-0100: Children and Youth Fund - Updates

Dear Councilmembers,

I write to offer my support for Bill 25-0100, which seeks to make timely updates to the Baltimore Children & Youth Fund. I am a resident of District 13 in Baltimore City.

I am a teacher at Bard High School Early College, Baltimore, and I have worked with young people in educational and mentorship capacities for over a decade in Baltimore and the greater DMV. Having taught elementary school at Patterson Park Public Charter, middle school at Highlandtown 237 Elementary/Middle, high school at Dunbar and now Bard, and college students at Johns Hopkins University, I am keenly aware of the benefits students get from the kinds of programs funded by the Baltimore Children & Youth Fund.

The Baltimore Children & Youth Fund (BCYF) was approved in 2016 by Baltimore City voters via a charter amendment to be a nonlapsing fund supported by city tax dollars that would invest in the well-being of Baltimore's young people. In the years following its creation, the Fund was temporarily managed by Associated Black Charities, and in 2020 the City Council passed legislation designating a new permanent fiscal agent for the fund, along with a new board and staff leadership. BCYF provides grants and capacity-building support to community-based organizations serving children, youth, and young adults. The Fund centers its work on racial equity, intergenerational leadership, community ownership, and collective decision-making.

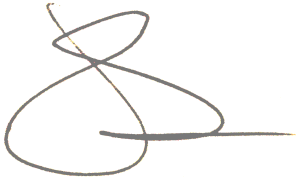
Nearly ten years after its creation, and five years since the creation of the current management structure, Councilmember Mark Parker's legislation updates the 2020 law to align the law with current operational realities and to better support BCYF's critical mission to fund and build the capacity of youth-serving community-based organizations. This update includes bolstering BCYF's impact by strengthening community accountability in the grant-making process, youth leadership on the board, technical assistance for grassroots organizations, and clarity in the relationship between BCYF and City government.

In addition to teaching in Baltimore City Public Schools, I taught and designed curriculum for the Close Up Foundation, the leading national civics education nonprofit, for over half a decade, working with thousands of students from all over the U.S., and I have mentored Baltimore students in an after-school program, The Intersection. I strongly believe that leadership skills are developed through the act of leading, and I wholeheartedly endorse the opportunities for such leadership development enabled through the funding provided by the Baltimore Children & Youth Fund.

I believe this legislation offers important updates to support the Fund's work in serving Baltimore's youth and youth-serving organizations. I provide full support to Bill 25-0100 and urge the Committee to issue a **favorable recommendation** and move the bill forward to the full City Council for approval.

Please feel free to contact me if additional information would be helpful.

Best,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, featuring a large, stylized 'S' or 'C' shape with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jacob Israel Cordón Chilton
Faculty in Literature
Bard High School Early College, Baltimore
2801 N Dukeland St.
Baltimore, MD 21216

Hello, My name is Sharreen Brown, I am a proud graduate of a BCYF Grant funded program and have since advanced to Peer Support specialist with Each Teach, another BCYF Grant funded program and a Baltimore based nonprofit advancing gainful employment for marginalized residents. I oppose the proposed bill 25-0100 Children & Youth Fund.

Support from the BCYF makes our work possible. Through BCYF, we deliver evidence supported, brain-based workforce training grounded in NEAR Science, which helps young people like me and my family build emotional regulation, obtain employment, retain jobs, and advance as productive, tax paying citizens. This work reduces long term public costs by addressing root causes rather than crises.

While I value accountability and transparency, I am concerned that the proposed legislation, as written, would weaken youth voice on the board and restrict mission critical investments like capacity building and training that small, grassroots organizations rely on to be effective.

I urge the Council to preserve strong youth representation and the flexibility that allows BCYF to function as a true backbone organization for Baltimore's youth serving ecosystem. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Nellie Power, LCSW-C
3107 Huntingdon Avenue Baltimore, MD 21211
Baltimore Children & Youth Fund Board of Directors

Subject: Testimony on Bill #25-100
To: The Honorable Members of the Baltimore City Council
From: Nellie Power; Huntingdon Avenue, Remington Resident; Baltimore Children & Youth Fund Board of Directors
Date: December 17, 2025
Position: Oppose

Dear Members of the Council,

As a Board Member and Treasurer of the Baltimore Children & Youth Fund, I am writing in opposition to Bill #25-0100.

First and foremost, I want to be clear that I am not in opposition to efforts to enhance oversight and to ensure the Fund is meeting community needs. I welcome them. To achieve appropriate oversight, however, and to fulfill the intent of the Fund's founding—community-driven, youth-focused grantmaking—I join my fellow community advocates in requesting a truly collaborative process, with a specific request for a pause in order to convene two community working sessions and one Board of Directors working session with the bill's author. To date, there has been a disappointing deficit in collaboration, despite time and opportunity. A better process befits the intention of the bill and aligns with the foundational mission on which BCYF was built.

Additionally, I know that the Council cares deeply about trauma-informed practices. Baltimore communities and their leaders have a long and storied history of being impacted by governmental and nonprofit entities using resource-gatekeeping methods that impose funding practices and requirements *on* communities rather than *with* them. The subsequent damage to trust and programmatic success is the consequence. We need not replicate harmful practices, couched as “transparency and oversight”.

The legislation, as currently drafted, will have the unfortunate outcome of predictable negative consequences, including the following:

- Embedding increased auditing, governance, and grantmaking reporting requirements (including reporting timelines) and compliance procedures directly in statute will result in increased administrative costs, while concurrently—and ironically—capping allowable administrative expenses. Instead, board size and grant reporting and auditing requirements should be outlined in regularly updated Memorandum of Understanding supported by agency operational policies, which can more nimbly respond to the ongoing community feedback that should actually drive equity-centered grantmaking, rather than statutory micromanagement.
- Unintended harm will result from a conflict-of-interest policy that prohibits funding an organization that employs or is governed by a family member of BCYF staff or Board

Nellie Power, LCSW-C
3107 Huntingdon Avenue Baltimore, MD 21211
Baltimore Children & Youth Fund Board of Directors

members. This is an odd and overly restrictive prohibition in *Smalltimore*, where the youth-serving ecosystem often includes leaders wearing many hats and maintaining close relationships with other community leaders. BCYF's current policy already requires disclosure and recusal.

- Grassroots organizations are the intended beneficiaries of BCYF funds. They have deep community relationships and proven reach in underserved communities but often have the least administrative and operational resources to do their important work. The technical assistance and professional development provided by BCYF are already cost-effective supports which strengthen the youth development ecosystem. In addition, the community of practice and network-building that arise from learning and sharing opportunities will bear fruit for years to come. Reducing or capping funds for technical assistance serves only to create harm and reduce efficacy.
- Imposing rigid grantmaking process language and requirements in statute, rather than allowing those processes to be governed through operational policy, could cause real harm especially in times of crisis. BCYF's decision to allocate one-time emergency funding for YouthWorks, while highly criticized, was mission-aligned and represented an intentional investment in youth employment, workforce readiness, and pathways to long-term opportunity. While I hope the Board of Directors never again has to make the kind of difficult decision required to approve that allocation, concerns about implementation and decision-making can only be meaningfully addressed through the type of collaborative conversations we are requesting.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nellie Power". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nellie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Power".

Good morning,

My name is Corin “Tiny” Adams, and I am the Founder and CEO of Leader Breeders, a Baltimore-based youth-serving nonprofit and current BCYF grantee.

I want to express concern about provisions in Bill 25-0100 that would tie grant eligibility or award levels to an organization’s prior-year revenue, as well as language that could introduce new governance or board-related requirements. For organizations like ours, community-rooted, growing, and responsive to real-time needs -these changes would have directly impacted our ability to access BCYF funding, despite strong program outcomes and deep community trust.

My non profit is 5 years old. Prior to becoming a grassroots grantee , everything i did for the youth and community came out of my pocket. BCYF gave me an opportunity to compensate myself for all the 14 hour days i was working in addition to being able to sustain our mentorship program knowing that we were covered for at least 6 months.

Some of the recommended provisions risk shifting eligibility toward larger, more established nonprofits with greater administrative capacity, while creating barriers for smaller, community-based organizations that BCYF was specifically designed to support. Hard-coding grantmaking and reporting processes into law, and introducing unfunded governance burdens, would reduce flexibility and increase administrative workload for organizations already operating close to the community. BCYF has provide capacity building that helped me realize the things we just didn’t know about administratively. With BCYF’s award and the workshops it allowed Leader Breeders to become more attractive for other funders, using our relation to BCYF for funding. They’re grand help get us the necessary exposure for the great work we’re doing.

BCYF funding has allowed us to meet urgent youth needs as they arise, not based solely on what our revenue or board structure looked like in a prior year. Preserving an equity-driven, community-responsive model is critical to ensuring organizations like ours can continue serving Baltimore’s youth.

I support BCYF's request for additional community working sessions and a Board working session with the bill's author to collaboratively address these concerns before the bill advances.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this perspective and for considering the lived experiences of organizations and youth directly impacted by this legislation.

Feel free to reach out if you need anymore information.

Thank you

Corin Tiny Adams

CEO/Founder

Leader Breeders

www.leaderbreeders.org

Kierstyn Hargrove December 12th, 2025

Letter of Support for Bill 25-0100: Children and Youth Fund - Updates

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am writing to express my support for Bill 25-0100, which aims to bolster the impact of the Baltimore Children & Youth Fund, by strengthening the transparency, accountability, and community representation in the Fund's governance and grantmaking processes. I live in District 3.

I am a student at Bard Highschool Early College. My friend's after school program often runs into problems with transportation to meet up with other schools to debate. With some discussion the problem usually is solved, as other parents are willing to give other students rides, as debate is something that everyone in the club is truly passionate about, but it would be nice if there was money for funding transportation. I am not necessarily expecting the funds to go specifically towards this problem, but it would be nice to know where the money is going! I feel comfortable as long as I know the money is going towards something positive and uplifting the community of the youth.

The Baltimore Children & Youth Fund (BCYF) was approved in 2015, by Baltimore City voters via a charter amendment, to be a nonprofit fund supported by city tax dollars that would invest in the well-being of Baltimore's young people. In the years following its creation, the Fund was temporarily managed by Associated Black Charities, and by 2022, a permanent fiscal agent was established, along with a new board and staff leadership. Ten years after its creation, and three years since the formalization of the organization's structure, Councilmember Mark Parker's legislation seeks an update to align the law with current operational realities and to better support BCYF's critical mission to fund and build the capacity of youth-serving community-based organizations.

When it comes to activities, my friends and I are very involved. My friend participates in after-school activities like debate and volleyball, while I myself explore activities outside of school like trading events, running club, and nature inspired arts & crafts, where money is not a major concern. We are very passionate about both of these activities, which help us define who we are, what we want to do, and how to spend our time productively and socially. The joy that my friend and I get from our extracurricular activities is something I would not trade for anything, and I would like to know that it is also a value to The Baltimore Children & Youth.

I endorse Bill 25-0100 and urge you to pass it into law. Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



**Position : Opposition to Bill 25-0100
To The Member Of The Baltimore City Council:**

B-360 is an advocate for youth and young adults in Baltimore City and a proud grantee of Baltimore City Youth. Our mission is to utilize dirt bike culture to end the cycle of poverty, disrupt the prison pipeline, and build bridges in communities. Through education, community engagement, career preparation, and events, we equip youth and young adults with the skills to secure educational and career opportunities, while changing perceptions. We align with the priorities of BCYF, City Council and Baltimore as a whole. Since 2017, we have served over 11,000 youth and young adults, starting as young as 4, and employed/pipelined over 70 at-risk/justice-involved participants, achieving significant success and impact.

- 92% of participants are interested in or pursuing STEM careers.
- Standardized test scores increased by 41 points.
- 97% diversion rate among participants.
- 0% recidivism among internally hired diversion youth, demonstrating the effectiveness of culturally anchored, employment-centered intervention.
- Baltimore City experienced an 87% decrease in crime.
- Redirecting young adults to programming instead of jail sentences saved \$6.2M in taxes

As a grassroots organization, we are proud grantees of the Baltimore City Youth Fund which has helped us make the impact we have seen today. As a grantee, we can be astute to the accountability and transparency that BCYF leads with as evidenced by the comprehensive reporting we complete as grantees. Unlike other tax payer funded initiatives, the reporting requirements BCYF has implemented for grantees is extensive and includes the following:

1. Review of Grants Manual
2. Annual Grant Award Budget
3. Certificate of Insurance
4. Annual Criminal History Record
5. 4 Quarterly Programming Reports
6. 12 Monthly Expense Reports
7. 12 MOED Monthly Staffing Reports
8. 4 Quarterly Programming Reports

This totals 32 reports for the year that all require time, attention to detail and approval before any payments can be dispersed to our organizations.

Our concern with more “oversight” placed on BCYF is the overload it will have on grantees and the way it will pull us away from the impactful work we currently do to focus even more on data and reporting. Grassroots organizations have a fine balance of working to improve



the community and having the support to report on that impact. With this proposed legislation we have the following questions :

- Will City council going to hire a data team that can support each grantee with the increased reporting measurements that BCYF will impose?
- Will City Council going to create funding opportunities that will help the operations of grassroots organizations?
- What issues does City Council have with the current reporting requirement or could currently data be utilized to get the transparency City Council is looking for?

We do not feel like these questions have been answered, thought tough or taken into consideration in order to pass any new legislation. For these reasons we are in **OPPOSITION OF Bill 25-0100.**

Baltimore City's claim to historic lows in homicide, gun violence reduction, teen and youth engagement, and the renaissance as we know it has been rooted in equity, holistic approaches and by uplifting grass roots organizations like those that BCYF supports. As a City Council, that same approach should be taken when creating bills/legislation - not a one sided stance on what accountability or oversight looks like but actually understanding what mechanisms BCYF already has in place to be transparent, and looking at all of the ways their current mechanisms impact the people doing the work.

We look forward to you all working together with BCYF to resolve any issues and continuing the progress of supporting organizations like ours doing the work to make Baltimore better.

Sincerely,
Brittany Young | Founder and CEO B-360



Testimony of Austin Brown
Co-Founder, Global Air Drone Academy
Baltimore City Council Hearing on Proposed Bill 025-100
Thursday, December 18 at 12:30 PM

Good afternoon Mayor Scott, President Cohen, members of the Baltimore City Council, and fellow residents of Baltimore.

My name is Austin Brown, and I am the Co-Founder of the Global Air Drone Academy, a Baltimore-based nonprofit organization founded right here in our city. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on proposed Bill 025-100 and the future of the Baltimore City Youth Fund.

The Global Air Drone Academy was created with a simple but powerful mission: to show young people, especially those from historically underrepresented communities that STEM is not just about technology, but about opportunity, ownership, and entrepreneurship.

What began as a small, local effort has grown into an organization that has reached thousands of children across Baltimore, and thousands more around the world. Through our programs, students don't just learn how to fly drones. They learn how science, technology, engineering, and math can open doors to real careers, real businesses, and real futures.

Our work has received national recognition. Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg visited our program to see firsthand what young people in Baltimore are capable of when given the right resources, mentorship, and belief. That moment mattered—not because of who visited us, but because it affirmed what we already knew: the talent in Baltimore is extraordinary.

And yet, despite our success, the reality behind the scenes has often been incredibly difficult.

Like many grassroots organizations, we have faced tremendous financial and operational challenges. There was a point before receiving funding from the Baltimore City Youth Fund, when we were seriously considering shuttering our organization altogether. Not because the need wasn't there, and not because the impact wasn't real, but because sustainability without consistent support is extraordinarily hard.

BCYF changed that.



The funding we received allowed us to continue and expand our programming, to show up more consistently in young people's lives, and to deepen our impact across the city. Because of BCYF, we were able to keep our doors open and keep hope alive for the young people we serve.

I want to share the story of one of those young people.

Maleek Surrette was one of our students. He was bright, curious, and deeply proud of the work he did in our program. He built drones with us, something that meant so much to him that when he was tragically murdered in Baltimore at just 15 years old, it was listed as one of his crowning achievements in his obituary.

When his grandmother called to tell me that Maleek had passed, she shared how proud he was of building a drone through our program. I couldn't help but wonder: if we had been able to keep our programming year-round, if we had been able to be an even stronger, more consistent presence in his life, could it have made a difference?

We will never know. But what I do know is this: programs like ours matter.

Yes, we help students earn drone licenses and trust certificates. Yes, we teach them hands-on technical skills. But more importantly, we teach them that the possibilities are endless. We teach them to stay in school. We teach them that their lives have value, and that no matter where they come from, anything is possible.

BCYF made it possible for us to continue that work.

That is why I am deeply concerned about proposed changes that would undermine organizations like ours. A vote in favor of this measure, as currently written, is a vote against the interests of Baltimore's children. It risks destabilizing programs that are already doing the hard, necessary work of reaching young people before it's too late.

We cannot afford to leave any children behind. Not in this city. Not now.

I urge the Council to protect the Baltimore City Youth Fund, to listen to the voices of grantees, families, and young people, and to recognize that these investments are not abstract budget lines, they are lifelines.

On behalf of the Global Air Drone Academy, on behalf of students like Maleek, and on behalf of the thousands of young people who are counting on us, I respectfully ask you to oppose this measure.



Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to Baltimore's future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read "Ant B".

Testimony

Need for Community Working Sessions

Community working sessions are essential for revealing the real-world consequences of proposed reporting rules on grantees. There's often a significant gap between how requirements appear in policy documents and how they function in daily operations. Regulations that seem straightforward during development can become unmanageable burdens when organizations are simultaneously trying to deliver programs, serve communities, and maintain their core mission activities.

Effective reporting and compliance frameworks must be built on actual operational realities, not theoretical projections. Organizations face obstacles including navigating intricate federal regulations, building robust financial and administrative systems, and ensuring compliance with detailed reporting requirements [Philanthropy Together](#). Grantees possess irreplaceable insight into which requirements drive meaningful accountability and which simply generate administrative overhead without adding value. Their frontline experience is the only reliable guide for distinguishing between compliance measures that strengthen organizational effectiveness and those that merely drain resources.

Without community working sessions, these amendments risk creating unintended barriers to access.

- **Resource depletion**- Smaller organizations struggle to allocate funds for comprehensive reporting systems or lack staff with the expertise needed to produce detailed evaluations [Bridgespan](#). Organizations can spend over 10% of their budget on compliance alone—money diverted from serving communities.
- **Missed deadlines and penalties**- Missing filing deadlines is one of the most common compliance pitfalls [Community Tool Box](#). Misaligned timelines lead to funding loss or revocation of tax-exempt status.
- **Inaccurate reporting**- Failing to submit accurate or complete reports can result in penalties or loss of funding [Episcopalhealth](#). Requiring data organizations don't collect produces either non-compliance or meaningless reports.

- **Exclusion of grassroots groups-** Complex requirements systematically lock out smaller, community-based organizations—often those closest to the communities being served.

Community working sessions integrate grantees' on-the-ground expertise directly into policy development. These organizations know which requirements are operationally viable, which deadlines align with their fiscal realities, and which performance indicators authentically reflect their impact. This collaborative approach shifts compliance from an extractive obligation into a shared commitment, creating requirements that build organizational capacity rather than deplete it.

CALL TO ACTION: I urge you to convene a working session with BCYF grantees, staff, and Board members before moving forward with these **amendments**. Give those who will live with these requirements a voice in shaping them. This is how we create policies that serve accountability without sacrificing accessibility, that strengthen our nonprofit sector rather than weaken it.

Thank you,
Paula LeVere
Founding Artistic Director
Dance Happens, Inc.

Dyon Davidson
6522 Pioneer Dr.
Baltimore, MD 21214
Beadlyspeaking@gmail.com
December 18, 2025

Re: Opposition to Baltimore City Council Bill 25-0100

Dear Members of the Baltimore City Council,

I am writing to respectfully oppose Bill 25-0100 based on my experience as the Founder and Director of Beadly Speaking, a Baltimore-based youth empowerment and arts education program serving elementary, middle, and high school students.

Young people are more likely to succeed when they are supported by trusted, community-based programs, especially those who don't always thrive in traditional school settings. However, these same grassroots organizations typically operate with small teams and limited capacity. The additional administrative restrictions and funding limitations proposed in this bill risk placing unnecessary barriers on programs like ours, diverting time and resources away from direct services to youth.

While accountability and transparency are essential, policies that prioritize reduced administrative spending without recognizing the real labor required to design, teach, manage, and evaluate programs ultimately undervalue the people doing the work. Quality programming does not happen without fair compensation, planning, and community trust.

I urge the Council to reconsider this bill and instead pursue solutions developed in collaboration with small, community-based organizations closest to Baltimore's youth. Strengthening BCYF should mean supporting, not constraining, the programs that are already making a meaningful impact.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dyon Davidson,
Founder & Director, Beadly Speaking Jewelry

December 16, 2025

Re: City Council Bill 25-0100 – Children and Youth Fund Updates (OPPOSE)

Dear Chair Bullock and members of the Education, Youth, & Older Adults Committee,

My name is Kimberly Sauer, and I am writing to you today as a constituent of Councilman Mark Parker and on behalf of Fearlessly Loving Yourself, Inc. (FLY). **I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Council Bill 25-0100.**

Before serving as Chief of Staff to Councilman Kristerfer Burnett, I was the co-founder of Fearlessly Loving Yourself, a grassroots mentoring program in Councilman Bullock's district, serving girls ages 7 to 18 in Southwest Baltimore. We were one of the first organizations funded by the Baltimore Children and Youth Fund (BCYF). I can say without hesitation that BCYF is one of the primary reasons grassroots organizations in Baltimore City are able to survive, grow, and thrive.

My opposition is rooted not in resistance to accountability or transparency, but in deep concern that this bill fundamentally undermines the purpose, governance structure, and racial equity commitments of the BCYF. As proposed, this legislation shifts power away from the community-centered Board, imposes overly prescriptive statutory controls that conflict with best practices in participatory grantmaking (like requiring 3rd party audits annually) as well as disproportionately burdening the Black and Brown-led grassroots organizations the Fund was designed to support.

BCYF was established by voter mandate with a clear and intentional purpose: **to begin to redress historic inequities created by generations of structural racism and the concentration of white wealth, particularly as it relates to the underinvestment in Black and Brown communities and youth-serving organizations.** The Fund was intentionally not designed as a traditional City grant program. Originally, it was and is structured as a community-centered, independent grantmaking institution separate from City government but grounded in community ownership and collective decision-making.

From its inception, BCYF has served as a corrective mechanism, redirecting public resources toward organizations that have historically been excluded from large-scale public and philanthropic funding due to limited capacity, lack of political access, or structural bias in traditional procurement systems. Central to this mission has been robust, hands-on technical assistance that helps grassroots organizations, like FLY, build sustainable infrastructure, strengthen financial systems, and responsibly manage larger grants that are not typically awarded to us.

Council Bill 25-0100 represents a significant departure from BCYF's original vision. Rather than respecting the role of the Board of Directors as the legally constituted governing body of the Fund, this legislation attempts to regulate the Fund through statute in ways that properly belong within Board governance, bylaws, and internal policy-setting.

Voters created BCYF to be independent, community-led, and insulated from political control. When a Councilmember uses legislative authority to restructure board composition, codify reporting requirements and application processes, and require annual 3rd party audits, while simultaneously holding a board vote, that crosses from oversight into self-governance through legislation.

Other BCYF board members do not have the power to draft laws, compel hearings, initiate audits, or threaten dissolution. This undermines the principle of equal fiduciary responsibility among board members. This is not about personalities or intentions. It is about protecting the integrity of a voter-mandated fund that was established out of a need for our community. When a City Councilmember uses legislative authority to govern a board where they hold a vote, the public loses confidence, community power is weakened, and the promise of independence is broken. This is a major conflict of interest.

Additionally, legislating grant procedures, application requirements, reporting frequency, audit practices, and internal operations at this level of specificity strips the Board of its ability to respond to community feedback, adapt to evolving needs, and exercise fiduciary and programmatic judgment. It effectively transfers power from a community-centered Board to the City Council, contrary to the intent of the Charter and the voters.

While framed as accountability measures, many provisions of this bill will exclude or disadvantage smaller, grassroots organizations, particularly those that have far less capacity or organizations like FLY that use fiscal sponsors and are not independently established 501 (C)(3)s. Codified monthly reporting requirements, extensive documentation mandates, rigid eligibility restrictions, and caps on grant structures may be manageable for large, well-resourced nonprofits; however, they pose serious barriers for community-based organizations operating with lean staff and limited capacity. Should a grantee or the fund need to pivot outside the scope of this legislation due to the fluid and ever-changing needs of our community, this would create significant legal implications that jeopardize both the grassroots organizations and the Fund itself.

The Fund's existing model of intensive technical assistance, flexible support, and relationship-based accountability is not a flaw... it is a core feature designed to ensure both good stewardship of public dollars and long-term capacity-building of Baltimore's grassroots organizations. Codifying inflexible requirements in law risks reversing years of progress toward equitable access to funding.

I am deeply troubled by the broader context in which this bill is being advanced. BCYF overwhelmingly serves Black- and Brown-led organizations and communities that have borne the brunt of systemic disinvestment. Yet, the co-sponsors of this bill are overwhelmingly white men. This disconnect raises serious concerns about whose voices are being prioritized in decisions about the Fund's future.

I also want to note that racial equity is not **only** about outcomes... It is also about process and power! When legislation that fundamentally reshapes an racial equity tool is driven without meaningful leadership from those most impacted, it risks reproducing the very inequities the Fund was created to dismantle.

If the Council believes reforms are necessary, those conversations should occur with support and in partnership with the BCYF Board and staff, grantees, youth, and community stakeholders, through transparent, inclusive processes that honor the Fund's original intent which unfortunately is not the case.

BCYF exists because the people of Baltimore demanded a new approach - one rooted in trust, community leadership, and repair of historic harm. This bill moves us away from that mandate. **I respectfully ask that it not advance.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Kimmy Sauer, District 1 Resident
Co-Founder of Fearlessly Loving Yourself, Inc.

Oral/Written Testimony in Support of BCYF

Bill Number: 25-0100

Good afternoon Council President and Members of the City Council.

My name is Lisa Molock, and I am the Executive Director of Let's Thrive Baltimore, a Baltimore-based nonprofit organization that has been serving young people and families for several years. I am here today to provide testimony regarding Bill 25-0100.

First, I want to be very clear: we are asking the City Council to pause before voting on this bill.

Before any final decisions or changes are made to the Baltimore Children & Youth Fund (BCYF), we strongly believe the Council should engage in meaningful community input. That means hosting public listening sessions, community meetings, and neighborhood forums—opportunities for grant recipients, youth, families, and community-based organizations who directly benefit from BCYF funding to share their experiences and perspectives.

BCYF is already working. It is not broken.

Through BCYF's multi-year funding, our organization has been able to build real sustainability. Because of this stability, we have maintained over a 90% youth retention rate, and we have achieved 100% retention for young people who have participated in our program for two or more years.

The outcomes speak for themselves:

- Our young people are graduating from our programs with industry-recognized certifications
- They are entering the workforce

- Or they are enrolled in community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities
- Most importantly, they are thriving

BCYF does more than provide funding. They monitor programs responsibly, offer technical assistance, and truly build up community leaders and directors. They support organizations like ours in becoming stronger, more accountable, and more impactful.

From our experience, BCYF has done an excellent job. They are making meaningful progress across the city, especially in communities that have historically been under-resourced.

That is why we respectfully ask the City Council to pause the vote on Bill 25-0100, take the time to listen to the community, and allow those most affected—youth, families, and grassroots organizations—to be part of the conversation before any changes are made.

Decisions about BCYF should be made with the community, not without us.

Thank you for your time, your service, and for the opportunity to share our experience today.

Councilman Bullock and Members of the Education and Youth Committee:

Understanding how BCYF spends its money is critical and as such I support -- with some reservations and concerns -- 25-0100.

In the summer of 2025, more than \$9 million was transferred from BCYF to the city, about half of which was used to support YouthWorks, the summer employment program. (Disclosure: I'm the parent of child who participated in YouthWorks.) Additional funds were directed to Baltimore's Promise, to mayoral initiatives, and to "summer programming." Laudable activities all, but the funds were transferred on the say-so of the Board of Directors, and not through the competitive grants process promised to voters.

These funds, so precious we needed a Charter amendment to protect them, were *never* supposed to substitute for or replace funding for children and youth programs or services. The very creation of the BCYF was premised on protection: no matter how bleak the fiscal picture, no matter the competing priorities, these funds – these precious, special funds – would be preserved. We wouldn't balance the city budget on the backs of our children, not with these funds.

Although its [annual report](#) stretches to more than 100 pages, BCYF never says how many children were served by each organization for what sum of money. Instead, the report has grantee totals and *process* measures – that is, counts of things like that ¾ of grantees opened the summer technical assistance newsletter – but not outcomes. Page 48 tells us that 22 percent of grantees find their services "very helpful," but the percentages only sum to 40 – what did the other 60 percent of respondents say?

Critically though, as a taxpayer, a parent, a community advocate, and someone who thinks budgets reflect an entity's moral commitments, the annual report tells readers a bunch about how the adults employed by BCYF were served but very little about the funds made their way from the city coffers to BCYF to grantees to meaningful *and measurable* activities for youth.

How many children have been served since BCYF's inception? In which neighborhoods? By which programs? Are some children served by more than one provider? What happens when a grant ends – are children referred to other organizations if capacity is reduced? Where do staff and volunteers go? How much are grantees spending on overhead and salaries, if any? What sort of financial transparency and controls is BCYF exercising over grantees? Can funds be used for capital expenses like renovations or equipment?

These are tough questions. Program evaluation is *hard*, unrelenting work. It is typically lumped into administrative or operating costs, each of which is eyed skeptically as slush that should be spent on youth. But it is only through such evaluation that we can understand where dollars are going, how much each organization is spending per youth and how successfully, and how success might be replicated and failure mitigated. Evaluation helps grantees understand how they're performing too, how they compare to others in the city, how they're managing their cash flow and human capital, which kids are dropping out and why.

But nearly a decade since the BCYF was created I am almost certain no one at the current entity, at ABC (the previous fiscal entity), or within city government could tell any of us how many youth have benefited from the Fund, let alone their race/ethnicity, gender, age, or neighborhood of residence.

That's not a commitment to children. It is sloppy oversight, content to conflate the passage of an ordinance with meaningful, measurable, and sustainable youth services.

Dedicated funds for youth are a relative rarity but there are some analogous examples in other parts of the country:

- Hillsborough County, Florida – the 4th most populous county in the state, home to Tampa and about 1.5 million people [established](#) an ad valorem tax of up to one-half mil (\$.0005) on the taxable value of real and tangible personal property within the jurisdiction of its members. That levy funds the Children’s Board. In turn, the Board funds training, technical assistance, capacity building, and community organizations that serve children and their families. The fund dedicates 84% of revenue to programs, more than what the City Council is proposing for BCYF. Grant opportunities are clearly outlined, with timelines and clear Request for Proposals. Importantly, there are clear [outcome measures](#) and an [annual report](#) with counts of the number of children and adults served. Their [audits](#) are posted in full.
- Seattle, Washington voters approved (and renewed) the Families, Education, Preschool, and Promise (FEPP) Levy (\$0.61 per \$1,000 assessed value). As with Hillsborough, Florida, the levy is clear about [where the funds are going and what they’ll support](#). Funds are overseen by a [committee](#) and it too produces an [evaluation report](#) detailing exactly where funds went, and why.
- Oakland, California has a Children and Youth Fund like Baltimore. The ordinance – renewed by voters in 2020 – requires that three percent of the General-Purpose Fund be set aside as annual revenues, along with interest accrued and any unspent funds from prior years and appropriated to the Oakland Kids First! Children’s Fund. Unlike Baltimore, it requires that 90 percent of funds be spent on grants and 10 percent on administration and evaluation. Like others, their [annual evaluation report](#) tells us how many kids were served, and their races and ages. We can also see survey data from participants and their parents or caregivers. Both Oakland and Seattle has explicit commitments to racial justice, with Oakland “allocating resources toward those youth in greatest need. The Oakland Community Stressors Index (OCSI) uses a combination of 22 risk factors across a range of domains to identify neighborhoods throughout the City experiencing chronic stress, violence, and trauma. A mapping of the zip codes of OCFY children and youth participants demonstrate that a majority of participants live in neighborhoods with the highest stressors as identified by the OCSI.”

Somehow, each of these funds manages to spend less on administration and overhead than BCYF while simultaneously telling constituents what it is doing with public funds.

Back in 2017, during a budget fight over community and afterschool funding I testified at, then Councilman Bill Henry [said the quiet part aloud](#): “I think the finance department lumps the funding for city schools in with general youth funding, so that, specifically, so that they can look like they aren’t spending three times as much money as they are spending on the police department as they are spending on discretionary youth spending.”

In Baltimore, if our budget is an expression of our priorities, then we value youth less than we value carceral action. After all, BCYF received less in city funding than just the recruitment division within the Baltimore Police Department. Again: the city is spending more on just the sworn personnel (\$14,502 million for 195 sworn personnel in FY26) [within one division of a city agency](#) than on dedicated youth funding.

Rather than use the power voters [bestowed on you in 2020](#) to truly reshape the mayor’s budget, the Council has largely foisted off responsibility for pesky questions about how we spend, and why our children’s share of the budget has to be specially enshrined and then shaved down by an outside entity (and their consultants and staff development and trips to learn about best practices, the future application of which is less than clear). Somehow, we never need an ordinance to set aside money for the police department. Funny that.

I’m glad the Council is asking questions, however belatedly, of BCYF. I worry though that too many members will be reticent to delve deeply, worried that any questioning will be twisted by our Sinclair-owned outlets into yet another tired story about government failures. I hope the Council is smarter and willing to admit failures, to course correct and oversee.

If BCYF can use best practices, so too can the Council and ask for the kinds of evaluation and data available to other jurisdictions. Why should we settle for less? Our young people are no less deserving than those in Florida, or Washington, or California and our community organizations are no less capable. It seems only our political leadership lags behind in asking where dollars have gone, or not gone, and why.

Melissa Schober

District 14

202-494-7881