



MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
From: Alysia Lee, President & CEO of Baltimore Children & Youth Fund
Date: April 27, 2026
Subject: City Council Bill 25-0100, Children and Youth Fund – Updates

Position: Favorable as Amended

The Baltimore Children & Youth Fund (BCYF) is in favor of the amended version of Council Bill 25-0100 and appreciates the City Council's responsiveness to community input throughout the legislative process.

At the time of introduction, BCYF and its stakeholders raised significant concerns regarding the bill's structure, particularly its misalignment with existing practice and the needs of the community. Since then, the City Council has undertaken substantial work to refine the legislation, incorporating feedback from the BCYF Board and staff, current and former BCYF grantees, Baltimore City youth development leaders, and community-based organizations.

As a result of this collaborative process, the bill has evolved in meaningful ways. BCYF is now in favor of the bill as amended.

Background

The Baltimore Children & Youth Fund is an independent public fund established by Baltimore City voters through a ballot initiative to create a dedicated, sustainable investment in the city's children and youth. Its creation reflects a clear mandate from residents to ensure that young people, particularly those historically underserved, have access to high-quality opportunities that support their growth, safety, and long-term success.

BCYF was designed to operate as a community-rooted grantmaking institution, distinct in its commitment to shared decision-making, equity, and responsiveness to local needs. At its core, BCYF exists to:

- Center community voice in funding decisions, including the leadership of youth and neighborhood stakeholders
- Advance equity by prioritizing investments in communities most impacted by systemic disinvestment
- Invest in youth-serving organizations, with a focus on both program delivery and organizational sustainability
- Strengthen Baltimore's youth development ecosystem

BCYF's model recognizes that effective youth development requires more than funding individual programs. It requires building an ecosystem where organizations, leaders, and young people themselves have the resources, capacity, and voice to thrive. The Fund has worked to realize this vision through a dual investment strategy that includes both direct grants and professional development support, enabling organizations not only to deliver services but also to grow, adapt, and sustain their impact over time. This approach has allowed BCYF to invest over \$40M since 2020 in youth-serving organizations, supporting over 17,000 youth opportunities annually and strengthening the city's youth-serving sector's infrastructure.

Importantly, BCYF was also designed with a strong accountability framework. Through its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City, independent audits, public reporting, and ongoing oversight, BCYF maintains transparency while preserving the flexibility needed to respond to evolving community needs. Ultimately, BCYF's goal is to help realize a more just, abundant, and creative Baltimore. A Baltimore where all young people have access to meaningful opportunities, and where community-driven solutions are resourced and sustained.

City Council Bill 25-0100

Throughout the legislative process, BCYF has engaged in good faith with the City Council, grantees, and community stakeholders to help ensure Bill 25-0100 aligns with both its intended goals and the practical realities of implementation.

At the time of introduction, BCYF identified areas where the bill could benefit from closer alignment with existing structures, including the City–BCYF MOU, established nonprofit practices, and community-centered grantmaking approaches. These observations were offered with the goal of strengthening the legislation so that it would reinforce, rather than inadvertently constrain, the flexibility and responsiveness that are essential to effective youth programming.

Through working sessions, stakeholder engagement, and ongoing dialogue, Bill 25-0100 has evolved in meaningful ways. Community input consistently emphasized flexibility, alignment with existing systems, strong youth and community voice, and minimal additional burden on BCYF grantees. This has shaped a more balanced set of amendments in the favorable version. Bill 25-0100 now preserves BCYF's accountability systems, protects key programs like Charm City Youth Athletics, removes a proposed funding cap, and maintains the requirement that at least one third of BCYF's board members be young people. These, and other improvements, preserve BCYF's proven approach as a nationally recognized funder of youth-serving organizations in Baltimore City.

BCYF recognizes and appreciates the City Council's willingness to engage with these perspectives and make thoughtful revisions. As the bill moves forward, BCYF views it as a product of collaborative policymaking and remains committed to continued partnership to support effective implementation.

Conclusion

The evolution of Council Bill 25-0100 reflects a meaningful and collaborative legislative process. While the bill initially required refinement, the engagement of community stakeholders and the City Council's responsiveness have resulted in a markedly improved proposal.

BCYF is **in favor of the amended bill** and appreciates the opportunity to contribute to its development. This process demonstrates the value of grounding policy in the lived experiences of the communities it serves.

As the Council considers final passage, BCYF remains committed to continued partnership to ensure that implementation:

- Upholds strong accountability
- Preserves operational flexibility
- Centers community voice
- Advances equitable outcomes for Baltimore's youth

Together, we can ensure that this legislation strengthens the impact of investments in Baltimore's young people and sustains the vision established by Baltimore City voters.

CC: Shamoyia Gardner, Deputy Chief of Staff, Council President's Office
Ty'lor Schnella, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Brandon Hansen, Vice President of External Affairs, BCYF