

The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
The Honorable Jim Rosapepe, Vice-Chair
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Maryland General Assembly
Electronically Submitted

February 9, 2021

RE: Maryland Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) FY2022 Operating Budget

Dear Chair Guzzone and Vice Chair Rosapepe:

We are writing on behalf of The Institute for Innovation & Implementation (The Institute) at the University of Maryland, Baltimore to **express our support for the work of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) related to ending and preventing youth homelessness.** The DHCD Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget includes funding for critical initiatives, including Maryland's longstanding work on the issue of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. The Maryland General Assembly has been an important supporter of this work. Since 2014, the Maryland General Assembly has approved critical funding enabling DHCD to contract with The Institute to serve as the coordinating entity for **Youth REACH MD**, Maryland's effort to better understand the number, characteristics, and needs of youth and young adults who are on their own and struggling with housing instability.

Youth REACH MD has conducted three Youth Counts, beginning in 2015, in collaboration with local continuums of care. **These Counts, which have expanded each year, have illustrated that youth homelessness exists throughout Maryland at higher levels than initially estimated and that youth and young adults who identify as Black, LGBTQ, and/or pregnant or parenting are disproportionately represented among this incredibly vulnerable population.** Each count moves us closer to a more accurate enumeration of youth and young adults who experience housing instability and provides important information about their experience and needs. This information has resulted in local and state-level activities to serve youth and young adults better through improved access to relevant services and identification of the factors that have contributed to the experiences of homelessness.

The COVID-19 response delayed the 2020 Youth Count, which had been scheduled for March 1-April 12, 2020. In partnership with DHCD, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Youth REACH MD Steering Committee, the Youth Count has been modified to be an online-only survey, which began on February 1, 2021 and will continue through April 31, 2021. Additionally, individual interviews are being conducted with youth and young adults across the state to learn more about their experiences with homelessness and housing instability and how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted them and their access to services and supports. On May 26 & 27, 2021, The Institute and DHCD will be hosting Maryland's second Youth Homelessness Symposium, which will be online-only. Recently, DHCD partnered with The Institute to establish a data warehouse on youth homelessness, which will strengthen the work of Youth REACH and the work undertaken by DHCD and local communities through administrative data linking, analysis, and reporting.

Thank you for your continued support of DHCD, Youth REACH MD, and the many efforts across Maryland to end and prevent youth homelessness. We are happy to provide more information about any of these efforts. Youth REACH MD reports are available online by visiting <http://www.youthreachmd.com/publications/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carrie Gould-Kabler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Carrie Gould-Kabler, MSW
Project Director, Youth REACH MD

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deborah Harburger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Deborah Harburger, MSW
Principal Investigator, Youth REACH MD