



# **NYS YOUTHBUILD COALITION**

20 Arlmont Street, Kingston, NY (845) 399-2757

Bonnie Landi, Chair  
Jennifer Lawrence, Upstate Vice Chair  
Ditashiah Kohn, Downstate Vice Chair

## **NYS Human Services Budget Hearing Testimony – February 13, 2023 By Bonnie Landi, Chair NYS YouthBuild Coalition**

### **2023-2024 Budget**

### **YouthBuild - The Solution for NYS Youth Workforce Training**

First let me begin by thanking you for the support YouthBuild programs received last year in the amount of \$12.5 million - \$10 million earmarked for YouthBuild in the ESD Pay for Performance Workforce funding and \$2.5 million appropriated by the Legislature as an LAO to fund wrap around services that include addressing mental health and substance use issues, addressing community gun violence, housing insecurity, food insecurity, job coaching, resume writing, self-care/proper hygiene, and leadership development, all of which have been determined as integral to the astounding outcomes YouthBuild programs yield.

On behalf of the thousands of at-risk youth we serve across the state, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide information about the value of YouthBuild programs in New York. The NYS YouthBuild Coalition represents 17 YouthBuild programs located on Long Island, in all five boroughs of New York City, on both sides of the Hudson River from Newburgh to Albany, and west from Schenectady to Buffalo. Additionally, we have requests from the communities of Hudson, Monticello, Syracuse and Yonkers who are seeking to start up a YouthBuild program for youth in their communities.

Aside from the obvious evidence and results of the Covid pandemic which disrupted the stability of families, communities and the workforce, it is clear that previous inequities we were aware of among youth of color have been exacerbated. One needs to look no further than the daily newspaper and television news to know that youth crime and youth gun violence is on the rise in communities across the state. YouthBuild programs have been making the necessary investments to address these extremely troubling and dangerous issues that are adversely affecting the youth in our communities.

YouthBuild's participation with the OCFS in a *Workforce Development Demonstration Project* clearly indicates the effectiveness of the comprehensive training provided and demonstrates the successful outcomes YouthBuild programs can achieve.

Those outcomes are as follows:

- **Students enrolled exceeded requirement** by 6% (More students served then required)
- **Placement** rate in a job or a post-secondary education program after completion: **100%**

- HSE & Industry Recognized **Credentials** Earned: **99%**
- Youth With Prior Justice System Involvement had no arrests – **Recidivism 0%**

The successful YouthBuild program model and our efficacy rates indicate we have the ability to address the very issues community leaders, and you as state policy makers, are grappling with. However, program resources are limited and we need the willingness of the state to continue to invest in our efforts. In that regard, the NYS YouthBuild Coalition is requesting this year that both the Senate and the Assembly, include in their one-house budget bills and the enacted budget, a continuation of the funding level of \$10 million earmarked for YouthBuild in the ESD Pay for Performance Workforce funding and \$2.5 million appropriated by the Legislature as an LAO for NYS YouthBuild programs. Additionally, let's start with an investment to expand the YouthBuild program to other communities so they can join the 17 current statewide programs and begin the process of addressing these extremely important issues for the youth of the state. A demonstration of that support can begin with the legislature passing the NYS YouthBuild Act which, as you are aware, has passed the Senate for the last several years, but has yet to gain the necessary momentum in the Assembly. YouthBuild programming can be an enormous resource if the NYS Legislature is willing to make the necessary investment.

Such an investment will put the funds in the hands of YouthBuild programs who already work directly with the most vulnerable youth in their communities who need assistance. The YouthBuild program model implements strategies to address the issues the Governor has stated are important for the youth of New York State.

**Some of those strategies that YouthBuild programs address include:**

- a) **Mental health intervention/assistance for participants.** Full funding for YouthBuild will allow programs to expand the already in-place mental health intervention strategies which were started at YouthBuild after the realization that the pandemic compromised the safety and stability of families and resulted in youth experiencing a greater incidence of mental health issues.
- b) **Gun and Community Violence Intervention for participants.** Every community where there is a YouthBuild program has experienced a tremendous increase in gun violence and general community violence. YouthBuild programs are already collaborating with established violence intervention organizations in their community to solve the issue for the youth they serve. Full funding for YB will allow programs the ability to expand their presentations for participants that will focus on community violence and gun violence intervention and offer the best information/knowledge.
- c) **Education.** The number of young people 16-24 who are out of school and out of work likely doubled as a result of the pandemic. These are the youth that YouthBuild programs provide services for. Participants are re-engaged in getting a high school diploma so they have a chance at success and the opportunity to enter post-secondary education programs.
- d) **One-on-one Case Management.** YouthBuild programs provide a full-time case manager who provides regular case management to assist participants with barriers to success, behavior issues, and family issues that impede their progress.

- e) **Hand-on Skills Work Training.** YouthBuild programs provide hands-on skills training for participants which is designed to assist in their knowledge of what it means to report for work and maintain a good work ethic.
  
- f) **Leadership Development.** As part of a YouthBuild program, Leadership Development is integrated throughout all components and is designed to promote youth leadership. Participants plan and identify workshops they want to be presented, meet with their local elected officials and speak at city council meetings on issues important to them, especially youth justice policy issues.
  
- g) **Employment Readiness and Job Placement.** YouthBuild programs employ a full-time Job Developer/Placement Specialist who works with employer partners, and the Workforce Investment Board One-Stop Career Centers to maintain a connection for placement of participants once they complete the YouthBuild program. Participants are placed in jobs or a post-secondary education program and the Job Developer follows their placement progress for 12 months after program exit.

All of these YouthBuild program model strategies are designed to guide youth in a more positive direction and “get them ready” for placement in a job and/or a post-secondary education placement.

We appreciate the recent engagement NYS YouthBuild programs have experienced over the past several years through various amounts of funding from the state legislature. However, we know that **YouthBuild programs can be part of the solution for NYS** to address the issues the youth of our state experience on a daily basis. As I said before, **let’s stop reinventing the wheel**” by investing in programs that haven’t succeeded or by investing in new programs when there is a proven comprehensive program model that works to address all of the issues the state continues to wrestle with to help the youth of NYS.

We can make progress together by implementing ideas and programs that work for the youth of NYS. **We are here, Invest in YouthBuild, let us be part of the solution!**

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Landi, Chair  
NYS YouthBuild Coalition