



May 12, 2016

Ms. Sarah Kurish, Esquire
Pennsylvania Senate Democratic Policy Committee

Dear Ms. Kurish:

On behalf of our Board of Trustees and network of youth courts nationwide, it is my pleasure to share this message of enthusiastic endorsement for the good works of Gregg Volz and his network of colleagues who seek to expand the reach of youth courts, a successful positive justice and civic engagement program in schools and communities.

Youth Courts give communities an opportunity to provide immediate response to young people who are experiencing school and community-based behavioral challenges. Youth courts provide a peer-oriented sanctions mechanism that allows young people to take responsibility, be held accountable and, when appropriate, make restitution for their actions. Peer pressure is used in youth courts to exert positive peer influence over adolescent behavior. In addition to imposing constructive sanctions, youth courts also offer a great civic opportunity for youth. Youth volunteers actively assume the roles of teen attorneys, clerks, bailiffs, jurors and even judges while gaining hands-on knowledge of the juvenile and criminal justice systems. They acquire career learning about police and probation officers, judges, social workers, court management and administration.

Youth courts promote alternative sanctions resulting in reduced costs per case as compared to the traditional justice system, reduced recidivism rates, and provide valuable civic engagement experiences. Expanding youth courts is an effective strategy for reducing juvenile delinquency and allowing young people to take responsibility for their actions in benefit to their communities.

We at the National Association of Youth Courts (NAYC) work to support and expand existing youth courts and improve their sustainability by bolstering the activities of the community service agencies dedicated to their vital youth development mission. We are pleased to have the opportunity to share our enthusiasm and welcome every opportunity to promote these excellent services for the benefit of the youth.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss further as we make progress together.

Sincerely,

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