

Stamford Youth Services Bureau

Why wait for someone else to make a difference?

Connecticut Legislature
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement
Testimony Against the Governor's Proposed Cuts to the Youth Services
March 3, 2015

Steven Browning

My name is Steven Browning. I am graduate of the Stamford Youth Services Bureau. I am currently enrolled as a freshman at the University of Scranton. While attending Stamford High School, I was a part of the bureau's Mayor's Youth Leadership Council (MYLC).

With all of the distractions in high school, it was easy to get lost in the crowd, or become disconnected with not only one's own morals, but also society's morals. Being a member of MYLC helped to instill my own morals, while also helping to educate others about the lost ethical code of society. MYLC reaches out not only to high school students, but also to the community as a whole to create a friendlier and open atmosphere—one that preaches social justice and activism; one that dares to speak about the issues that people show no regard towards.

The empowerment that MYLC brought to my life in high school has spilled over into my college career. Since being in college, I made it a priority to get involved with various clubs and organizations. The daring and willing attitude that MYLC members exhibited, and that MYLC's model of youth activism taught, gave me the courage to go past just applying to be a student senator and motivated me to make physical and political changes to my campus. I truly believe that without my prior experiences as an executive member of MYLC I would not have had the drive to achieve my personal ambitions.

I saw this model of social justice put into play during my four years at Stamford High, and I know that it made an impact on every student who also passed by a MYLC activity. I have yet to find another organization that is as productive and motivated as MYLC, not only in high school, but at the collegiate level. To cut the budget for such an influential group that aids an entire community in educating their youth would be a disservice, especially to those who MYLC is a voice for. I hope that you strongly reconsider your choice, as losing MYLC's advocacy and influence would be an enormous loss.

Thank you for your time and consideration in advance.

Sincerely,

Steven Browning

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Lexi Nikolopoulos

The Mayor's Youth Leadership Council (MYLC), which is a program of the Stamford Youth Services Bureau, was by far the highlight of my entire high school experience. I participated in a number of things at Stamford High but none of them had so significant an impact on my life as MYLC did. MYLC made me a better person. It shaped my values and taught me to be confident about what I believed in. MYLC's most important effect, however, lies in the fact that it gave me a platform to make a difference. As a part of MYLC, I could go to sleep every night knowing that I had made the world a better place than it was that morning. The mentality I adopted as an Executive Committee member of MYLC is one that does not see standing by and watching from the sidelines as an option. MYLC taught me and its hundreds of other members to refuse to ignore the horrible things that go on around us. We will carry this attitude with us into the next stages of our lives, continuing to actively raise awareness of important issues and stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves and we have MYLC to thank for that.

Sincerely,

Lexi Nikolopoulos
University of Massachusetts

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Kirsi Balazs

Becoming a member of the Mayor's Youth Leadership Council (MYLC) was the best decision I made throughout high school. It introduces students to important and prevalent issues in our society and teaches them how to direct their passion for youth activism towards creating safe and healthy climates in our schools and our local communities. MYLC provided me with real world experience with both our state and local governments and introduced me to serious problems in our community that are often overlooked. The organization has improved immensely since its beginning and I truly believe that all of its member's are a positive and important influence in our city.

Thank you. Kirsi Balazs
Lehigh University
