



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR MARCH 3, 2021, GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED FY 2022-2023 BUDGET
FOR HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES**

**H.B. NO. 6439 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING
JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

Dear Representative Toni Walker Senator Catherine Osten and members of the Appropriations Committee

As the Director for Madison Youth and Family Services (MYFS) and representing the YSB for the Town of Madison, I want to express our hope that you continue to fund YSBs. The Town of Madison receives a small portion of this State funding through DCF in the form of the YSB Main Grant and the Enhancement Grant.

YSBs are often overlooked and undervalued in terms of their overall impact within their communities, and this is both unfortunate and unwise if the State is concerned for how our communities can support their youth and families growing up in a social world that is evolving in a fast and at times unhealthy manner. Our referrals for mental health services have been steadily increasing in number and complexity, especially over the course of the pandemic. Our community involvement has needed to expand to address increasing rates of depression, anxiety and attempted suicide among our youth. We have needed to prioritize our broader prevention efforts to respond to the youth trends of increased vaping, sexting and risk for substance abuse including opioids.

Our programs are all guided by the same philosophy which is to educate, empower and support youth to help each other. Our programs build on the innate capacities of youth to be a part of a community and care for one another. As a result we see multiple referrals to community services and crisis services that were initiated by a young people, responding on behalf of a peer or family member to get help. This makes a difference every day on the most personal level, and serves as a major protective factor for the community.

Please consider the following. Our modest number of MYFS employees work together to provide a wide variety of crucial programs and services within our community. MYFS provides prevention programming and intervention services to address issues such as youth substance abuse, suicide

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prevention, youth stress and family/relational violence... just to name a few. We provide prevention programs in both small and large group programs as well classroom presentations. We provide supports and advocacy to at-risk groups including LBGT youth, families with disabilities, racial minorities and families with limited income. We have an outpatient mental health clinic that provides child and family therapy that is accessible and designed to be affordable and even free for those who have limited financial resources or for youth who are seeking help on their own. We provide crisis outreach to youth and families in our Town and have a daily presence in our schools. We are often serving as crisis counselors on the “front lines” of the community crises that directly impact our youth and families. Additionally we run a juvenile review board, provide multiple parent support groups and individual parent counseling. We also provide programmatic and fiduciary support to our Drug and Alcohol coalition known as MADE in Madison. Our staff and programs will reach thousands of Madison residents every year.

Please support the funding of the YSB grants, especially as other financial aid dwindles to Towns like mine. The financial support is crucial, and continued funding can further demonstrate to every Town that the State is safeguarding its YSBs to the best of its financial ability.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Scott Cochran, LCSW
Director of Madison Youth and Family Services