

February 25, 2021

Dear Senator Kushner, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Cicarella, Representative Betts, Senator Osten, and Representative Walker,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the following written testimony regarding the request for \$14,000 for the Town of Somers to establish an independent Youth Services Bureau.

My name is Allison Maynard, and I am the Director of Youth and Social Services for the Town of Somers. In December of 2019 this new department was established after Town Administration went through a lengthy process of evaluating the needs of our community and recognizing that there was an overwhelming demand for a department in town that was specifically addressing the needs of our youth and low-income residents. Upon my hiring, I discovered that the YSB funding allocation for Somers is part of a tri-town YSB (Somers, Stafford and Union). As a result, the Town of Somers does not receive any direct funding to provide support to our youth, yet the need is great.

The following statistics illustrate the call for more youth services in our community:

- The Town of Somers has over 2,000 residents that are under the age of 18.
- In the past year, 7 out of the 19 referrals to our regional Juvenile Review Board were from the Town of Somers.
- During the 2017/2018 school year the Town of Somers had an 11% chronic absenteeism rate.
- In 2020 the Social/Youth services department provided assistance to nearly 500 unduplicated individuals seeking services.
- Further, a town-wide survey was recently released and out of 492 responses 218 identified an increase in mental health services as one of their top priorities.

With the economic and emotional strains the pandemic has placed on our residents, it is our highest priority to offer more services to our children. In our department, we have seen an increase in people requesting access to additional support services to help their children cope with remote learning, absenteeism and myriad of mental health issues. The YSB funding that is being requested would ensure we are able to implement additional programming to provide our youth with the support they need and deserve.

I respectfully request that the Town of Somers receive our own funding to support an independent YSB so that we can directly assist our residents. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Allison Maynard, LMSW
Town of Somers

Director of Youth & Social Services

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Town of Somers
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