

Hello Madame Chair & distinguished members of the Appropriations committee.

My name is Josephine English. I am an 8th grade student at Tyl Middle School in Montville. This has been a difficult year for me as I get ready to leave middle school and start my high school journey. My involvement with the Youth Services Bureau began when I was in 4th grade and quickly became my favorite place to go afterschool. I made so many new friendships and had the support of so many trusted adults. I've had the most fun at the Youth Center then ever and I've made so many great memories there. I began to get involved with the middle school chapter of the Montville Youth Action Council and I love working with both middle schoolers and high schoolers to make a difference in our community and beyond. This experience allowed me to tap into my creative side and build my self-confidence.

I am here to share with you that my local Youth Service Bureau has been vitally important for me before, and during the pandemic. I could always reach out to any of the staff there if I was in a bad place and I felt safe there. The staff was always there when I needed them and some of the best people I've ever met. One of my favorite pandemic memories was when the YSB staff did a drive by parade visiting the homes to ALL the kids in the afterschool program, honking horns, waving and jumping out of the car with special signs to show they are thinking about us! I feel like I have gotten better in school because of all the help they offer after school. I feel more devoted to what I do and more hardworking and confident then when I first got there.

I encourage this committee to support all YSBs. They are a community resource that truly cares about all kids and families!

Thank you for your time.