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STATE OF MARYLAND
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
GOVERNOR'S YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Youth Issues Platform

1986



HARRY HUGHES
GOVERNOR

NCJRS

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The Governor's Youth Advisory Council has identified two Priority Issues which are of the utmost concern to the youth of Maryland: Automobile Insurance Discrimination and Student Members on Boards of Education. The Council has also determined 23 other Key Issues of Youth Concern. This document represents the Council's efforts to formulate its recommendations on the various issues to be considered by the Governor, the General Assembly and others concerned about the children and youth of Maryland. The Council by no means intends to imply that these are the only issues of concern to Maryland's youth and urges interested persons to contact the Council with their views.

Resolution No. 1-86
YOUTH ISSUES PLATFORM

- Whereas, The Governor's Youth Advisory Council is established by Executive Order of the Governor of Maryland to communicate to the Governor on:
- a. State actions underway which are impacting upon Maryland youth; and
 - b. Proposals for new State action to meet the special needs of youth; and
- Whereas, The Council provides an important resource to the Executive Department regarding the concerns of youth across the State; and
- Whereas, The Council has taken formal and informal surveys throughout the State to identify the needs, problems and issues of concern affecting Maryland's youth; and
- Whereas, The Current Issues and Governmental Action Committee of the Council has established the Council's two Priority Issues; and
- Whereas, The Council has compiled the findings from the said surveys, in addition to other Council research, to write this Youth Issues Platform for 1986,
- NOW THEREFORE,
- Be It Resolved, That on this day, 14 December 1985, the Governor's Youth Advisory Council hereby ratifies this document, and
- Be It Further Resolved, That this document shall be distributed to the Governor, to members of the General Assembly and to other concerned individuals and groups.

PRIORITY ISSUE: AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE DISCRIMINATION

Most sixteen-year-olds and their families are well acquainted with automobile insurance rates. If you are a young person in the State of Maryland, the issue of how much your insurance will cost is the one that is seriously considered from the moment you receive your driver's license.

In the insurance industry--either health, life, or home, and especially in automobile insurance--the consumer subsidizes the claimant. The good driver subsidizes the accident-prone. Young people, because of their excessively high rates, are paying for all kinds of drivers, at a higher rate than other insured persons. They are paying these rates only because they are under twenty-five.

The states of Massachusetts, North Carolina, Michigan, Hawaii and Montana have eliminated age as a variable in rate classification.

The state of North Carolina has adopted a law which prohibits discriminatory automobile insurance rates based upon the age and gender of the person insured. Once insured and licensed, the insurance rate should be based solely on the driving record. Only persons who prove to be high risk drivers after two years of initial driving experience continue to pay the higher rates for auto insurance. This type of system has the added advantage of providing an incentive for drivers to drive more safely in order to lower their premiums.

Another point of major importance is that of statistics. The insurance industry uses tables and statistics to validate the higher rates applied to young male drivers. However, there is no survey of statistics that applies solely to Maryland drivers. Also, there has been no new survey taken since 1969. The Maryland Insurance Commissioner should be furnished with such a survey to determine on what basis rates are being set. The biggest problem with statistics-based rates is that they violate the American jurisprudential principle of "innocent until proven guilty." The young people of today are paying high rates because their predecessors of a generation ago were "bad drivers."

The Council encourages the Commissioner, General Assembly and consumer organizations to seriously review this issue with an eye towards making premium costs more equitable without discrimination according to age, race, sex or ethnic background.

PRIORITY ISSUE: BOARDS OF EDUCATION: VOTING STUDENT MEMBERS

Today's youth are increasingly concerned with taking part in the decisions that affect them. As the consumers of the education product, youth are able to provide new and valuable information that is highly important when decisions directly relating to them are being made.

The Council believes that there should be at least one voting student member on the State Board of Education, the State Board of Higher Education, and each local board of education.

During the 1984 session of the Maryland General Assembly, the Council supported Senate Bill (SB) 283, which passed with amendments, placing a non-voting student member on the State Board of Higher Education. In 1985, the Council supported the successful SB 72 which--again passing with amendments--placed a non-voting member on the State Board of Education. There are also at least seven school systems which currently have students on their boards. One such county is Anne Arundel, which boasts six years of full voting representation characterized with both excellence in service and integrity in job performance.

The Council is in favor of such representation and advocates that these student members have a vote. This privilege would enable the youth member to take an active and direct role in the educational decision making process. Since these students would have hands on knowledge of education related issues, their input would be essential in making the decisions that affect all Maryland students.

In addition, the Council believes that in order to ensure credibility of a student board member, the student should be chosen in approximately the same manner as the other board members. For elected boards of education, the student should be elected by the public secondary school students. For appointed school boards, the student member should be appointed by the Governor.

OTHER KEY ISSUES OF YOUTH CONCERN

Adolescent Depression and Suicide

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among adolescents in the United States. The Council appeals to the Maryland Department of Education and to the Mental Hygiene Administration to review this problem, its causes and ramifications, and ways to alleviate it. The Council believes that cooperation and communication between the home, human service agencies, educators, the business community, and the religious community can lead to the reduction of depression and suicide among young people. Young people need information and education concerning problemsolving, signs of depression and/or suicide and resources to turn to for help. We support whatever budget, legislation and training is necessary to accomplish this.

The Chesapeake Bay

As Maryland's most valuable natural resource, the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries must be protected and preserved. The Council supports the Bay "Clean-Up" initiatives passed by the 1984 Maryland General Assembly and urges the State to continue funding for these programs. The Council urges the Governor and the General Assembly to do all that is possible to preserve the Bay and restore it for future generations. The Council also encourages education in our schools' curricula about the problems of the Chesapeake Bay. We recognize the efforts of groups such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and its educational programs and advocacy.

Child Abuse

Child abuse is a tragedy that must not be ignored. According to the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, more than two million children are abused each year in the United States. The Council commends the state and federal governments for the creation of special task forces to consider the problem. The Council further commends the Governor and the General Assembly for enacting some of the recommendations from the Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. In addition, the Council believes that background checks of those who work directly with children in public institutions and private day care programs are beneficial in preventing abuse. The Council implores the State to enact and enforce strict laws punishing known and repeated offenders of this crime.

Citizen Participation in Government

The Council believes it is essential that all citizens participate in democracy in a knowledgeable, thoughtful and responsible manner. In order to participate responsibly, youth must understand and be aware of how and why government functions. Accordingly, the Council encourages schools to promote reading, listening and critical thinking skills. The Council urges all youth to take time to inform themselves on issues. Finally, all youth are encouraged to do more than just vote. Youth should be made aware of opportunities for legal and responsible lobbying, campaigning and demonstrating to express their opinions on issues. The Council supports the laws requiring a morning program in public schools, including the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag. Citizen participation in government depends upon a strong respect for our nation and its institutions.

Confinement Facilities for Juveniles

Juveniles are being placed inappropriately in institutions. Lack of appropriate and developed programs, available to an offender and to the judges who have responsibility for committing delinquents, has led to overcrowded conditions in the Charles Hickey and Montrose Schools. The Council supports the allocation of additional resources as necessary to both institutions and to community programs to begin addressing problems including overcrowding and inappropriate placements.

Funding for Higher Education

The Council believes all students who desire to further their education should be given a chance to do so. The rising costs of a college education have prevented many low and middle-income families from sending their children to college. A professional job in today's world is difficult to obtain without a college education. During the summer of 1984, the Financial Aid Task Force recommended an increase of \$240,000 for the Distinguished Scholar Program. While no new funding was approved by the 1985 General Assembly, individual awards had been increased in 1984 and the State Board of Higher Education has requested additional increases in its 1987 budget. In addition, the Governor's Commission on Excellence in Higher Education, created in 1985, will also be addressing scholarship aid and student financial aid.

Guidance Counseling

Maryland youth spend a majority of their time in school, and, therefore, the educational system is obligated to implant and maintain a steadfast guidance counseling program. The Council believes that these school counselors should address topics ranging from careers to drug/alcohol abuse and refer the student to organizations which address such issues when needed. The Council believes that the guidance counselor is a personal as well as an academic advisor. The Council believes that the focus of guidance counseling should be counselors in primary and secondary schools -- enough to meet the need of students needing non-academic counseling on a timely basis, with adequate time for problem solving. The Council feels that the most effective way to maintain a superior guidance counseling system is to develop an intimate relationship between the student and counselor through compulsory meetings.

Juvenile Court

The Council opposes any further attempts to limit the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court. The adult system cannot begin to provide for the special treatment and remedial and vocational education needs of youth.

The Council also opposes any efforts to tie the hands of juvenile court intake officers. These people are specially trained to identify and properly deal with problems of the juvenile offender. Infringement on this role would not be in the best interests of the juvenile.

Other Key Issues, Continued

Lack of Recreational Activities

There is growing concern among adults as well as students regarding the lack of structured, accessible and affordable recreational activities available after school hours. The Council believes that with the increase of planned activities available after school and during summer months, there would be a significant decrease in the amount of vandalism, loitering and drinking by youngsters. Therefore, the Council encourages communities to come together and find appropriate places and activities for all ages. In addition, the Council supports the growth of non-alcoholic nightclubs for teenagers.

Latch-Key Children

Latch-key children are those who are left alone for extended periods of time, unsupervised by any responsible person. Some of the many dangers to latch-key children include abduction or abuse by others who see that these children are alone, lack of nutrition, illness due to inclement weather or lack of proper medical care in the absence of parents or guardians, as well as the psychological problems that these children may endure. Latch-key children may be neglected children, and stringent efforts should be taken by school systems and the community at large to develop adequate and appropriate child care for all families needing it. Included should be opportunities for work-place child care, before/after school care in schools and expansion of existing public and private resources.

Peer Counseling

Peer counseling, youth helping youth, is an effective way to help young people with the many problems they encounter in their transition from childhood to adolescence to adulthood. In 1979, under E.S.E.A. Title IV-c from the Maryland State Department of Education, P.R.O.M.I.S.E., (Peer Reach-Out for Maryland Involving Students and Educators) was organized. The Baltimore City Schools maintain a student facilitator program which entails a training program enhancing self-awareness, communication skills, basic helping skills, values and decision making. The Baltimore County school system also fosters a peer counseling program, and many counties across the state support a Students Helping Other People (SHOP) program. The Council believes that a peer counseling program is necessary at junior and senior high levels. The Council recommends that the State Board of Education reevaluate the peer counseling system in order to place effective peer programs in all Maryland schools.

Programs for the Gifted and Talented

The Council recognizes the need for and supports educational commitment to young people in our state exhibiting unusual talent, creativity and academic achievement. The number of students filling Gifted and Talented classrooms is enough evidence of the interest in these classes. During the 1981-82 school year, 35,000 Maryland students participated in classes to reinforce their special talent in the creative arts, sciences and performing arts. Gifted and Talented programs in the regular school curricula are not mandated by law and receive only local funding. Existing programs could possibly be dropped if local resources become scarce. Therefore, the Council supports legislation to incorporate into the regular school curricula Gifted and Talented programs throughout the State. We also support and encourage expansion and continuation of teacher training programs designed for the teaching of Gifted and Talented youngsters.

Separation of Church and State

The Council supports continuing the historic commitment of the State of Maryland to the concept of the separation of church and state as it applies to the public schools at the elementary and secondary levels. A student's religious practice should entirely be a matter of personal choice, independent of the school's educational purposes. We oppose organized religious observances and structured periods of the school day for worship in public schools. While the Council supports the right of students to engage in voluntary prayer, we oppose any State mandated prayer.

State Regulation of Private, Church and Home Schools

The Council affirms the right and responsibility of parents and guardians to choose the type and place of education that their child receives.

Status Offenders

Coordinating community involvement is critical in the juvenile system. We encourage both public and private agencies to provide better programming for Children in Need of Assistance (CINA) and Children in Need of Supervision (CINS) and their families. Without proper assistance and treatment, these young people may easily turn to more serious delinquent or criminal behavior. We favor expansion of programs which emphasize individual and family counseling, such as youth services bureaus, recreational development and runaway youth homes staffed with professional counselors.

Substance Use and Abuse

Education is a means for addressing the problem of use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Alcohol and drug education programs have the greatest impact on younger adolescents; these programs should begin in elementary school. The Council urges the State Department of Education to improve and expand on these programs by soliciting young people's opinions on what would be an effective education program. The Council believes that continued support of counseling programs for young people with substance abuse problems is critical.

In addition, the Council supports student-run programs, such as Students Aiding Friends (SAIF) and Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD), which use positive peer pressure and education resources to influence students not to drink and drive. Also, the Council advocates programs such as Students Helping Other People (SHOP) and the Maryland Alcohol Drug Action Resource Team (MADART)

Other Key Issues, Continued

Teacher Competency

The quality of Maryland's educational system is dependent upon the teachers' ability to educate. Teachers need a motivation to encourage students to strive for academic excellence. One incentive would be to prove their competency through a standardized test on the subject matter they teach. Currently, unqualified teachers are granted job security through the tenure system, and, therefore, are not required to excel in their field. Teachers should only receive tenure for a limited period of time. In a 1983 Council survey of Maryland students, over half felt the current tenure system was insufficient for testing competence. Furthermore, over 91% of these students felt that continuing education and tests of competency should be used to help evaluate teachers for quality education in Maryland.

Violence Against Minority Groups

The Council is outraged by reports of increased violence against religious, racial and ethnic groups. The Council firmly supports the Governor in his firm stand against such acts. The Council also commends the Maryland State Board of Education for its continuing strong position against violence and expressions of hate and prejudice, particularly in Maryland public schools.

Voter Registration

Two recently enacted bills--HB 127 and HB 630--address making registration forms uniform throughout the state as well as making registration more accessible to the public by placing materials at all Social Security and Department of Motor Vehicles offices and health departments. The Council commends these efforts and urges the legislature and the Task Force chaired by Secretary of State Sheehan not to overlook the need of young people to become involved in their government through more accessible and timely registration opportunities.

Youth Representation on Advisory Committees and Task Forces

The Council urges the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly to continue to ensure that youth are represented on any task force or advisory committee dealing with youth issues. The Council believes that youth members are a valuable asset to these groups. Since they would be directly affected by the issues considered, youth members are able to give a different and "grass roots" perspective to the problem.

Youth Unemployment

The problem of youth unemployment is one of the most serious problems affecting Maryland's youth today. Large numbers of youth are moving into adulthood without any experience working in a job situation. The Council calls for the reenactment of the Summer Scholar Employment Act and a statewide program similar to the Youth Incentive Employment Pilot Project to provide more jobs for youth. We urge the Youth Work Experience legislation to continue. Collaborative efforts such as these increase job readiness and training while students are in school, as well as for those youth not in school.

For additional copies of this document or more information regarding the Governor's Youth Advisory Council, contact: The Governor's Youth Advisory Council, 301 W. Preston Street, Suite 1502, Baltimore, MD 21201 301/225-1290

Applications for the Governor's Youth Advisory Council are also available upon request.

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