



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

File #: RS2025-1100, **Version:** 3

A resolution supporting the Office of Youth Safety and requesting Mayor Freddie O'Connell ensure that a long-term sustainable approach to Youth Policy and Strategic Plan builds on past work and will extend beyond the current mayoral administration.

WHEREAS, at the February 4, 2025, Metropolitan Council meeting, public input from youth and community leaders indicated an imperative need to focus on youth in Nashville and Davidson County; and

WHEREAS, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools provides support for youth success in the classroom and through extracurricular activities. Additional support from the Metropolitan Government and community through summer and after-school programs provides substantial assistance to Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools for youth success; and

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County has initiated and sustained several youth initiatives for the past 15 years, including the Nashville After Zone Alliance ("NAZA") and Power Youth, which have high potential to scale and serve more youth due to their strong partnerships with community organizations; and

WHEREAS, the newly established Department Office of Youth Safety will offer at-risk youth a vital bridge to pathways for youth and neighborhoods and is an essential step in creating a better future for Nashville's youth; and

WHEREAS, the mayor has communicated his intention to transition the Office of Youth Safety out of the mayor's office following its stabilization to ensure its continuity; and

WHEREAS, decades of research have proven that sustainable investment in youth development outside of school time generates short and long-term impacts by contributing to improved school outcomes and successful career and life paths while reducing youth justice issues by as much as 20%. Every dollar invested in youth programs in afterschool space saves at least \$3 by increasing kids' earning potential, improving kids' performance at school, and reducing crime and juvenile delinquency; and

WHEREAS, improving the success of our youth is critical to provide social and economic opportunities for individual and community success. Evidence-based research demonstrates significant improvements in quality of life and workforce preparedness while reducing youth exposure to crime when there is effective investment in youth; and

WHEREAS, an integrated approach, including Life Skills Training, Mentorship Programs, Technical and Vocational Training, Civic Leadership and Engagement Development, Soft Skills Development, and Continuous Professional Development, and access to safe and age-appropriate amenities of Metro Community Life, provides a strong foundation in developing Youth Success; and

WHEREAS, these initiatives, along with other public, non-profit, and private programs, have provided enriching educational and developmental opportunities to thousands of young Nashvillians for decades; and

WHEREAS, Nashville community stakeholders have conducted research and presented evidence underscoring the critical need for increased investments in youth development, skill-building, and career exploration, in a coordinated manner, to support the sustainable growth of a new generation of the workforce in a city with a consistently expanding economy; and

WHEREAS, successful long-term commitments require diverse funding sources to support sustainable strategies. Public funding sources for youth programs can fluctuate due to economic trends and funding priorities; and

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Government recognizes the value that these programs bring to youth development, skill-building, and career exploration and acknowledges that these systems must be sustained and expanded to increase equitable access to young Nashvillians; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of a centrally coordinated entity and a systemic approach to youth initiatives across the city, including within Metropolitan Government departments, will enable Nashville to make equity-focused, data-informed, and evidence-based funding decisions for youth opportunities, with the objective of intentionally increasing access for the most underserved communities and bridging the opportunity gap; and

WHEREAS, improved coordination of all youth initiatives would maximize the focus on the holistic outcomes for youth to enable a successful future for young Nashvillians; and

WHEREAS, an advisory working group established by the Office of Youth Safety and composed of representatives from divisions of the Metropolitan Government and community-based consisting of the Mayor's Office, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, Metropolitan Council, NAZA and Power Youth, Department of Youth Safety, and nonprofit organizations associated with youth success should be convened to review options for the establishment of a coordinating entity that (1) provides consistent policies and strategies including evidence-based data and reports, that will be sustained for 15 plus years and (2) allows the diversification of access to funding for community organizations by increasing local funds and raising national, federal, and private funds to support youth initiatives; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Youth Safety, supported by the advisory working group, establishment of a new coordinating entity within the Metropolitan Government is intended to facilitate the coordination of demand and supply of youth programs for all age groups through structured and systemic data collection and analysis, funding, and advocacy, ensuring equitable access and fostering essential collaboration among Metro departments and community partners to generate a collective impact in a systemic manner; and

WHEREAS, this coordinating entity advisory working group will ensure consistency and continuity in youth development (including but not limited to after-school and out-of-school programming), career exploration, and employment initiatives by enhancing the opportunities for youth to learn and grow.; and

WHEREAS, a gap analysis should be commissioned to examine data on youth populations, employment, and key social determinants that can identify patterns and disparities at the neighborhood level. Insights will help pinpoint where resources should be directed to maximize the impact of youth engagement strategies through a targeted approach and is essential to the success of the coordinating entity; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther King's book "Why We Can't Wait" indicates the urgency in improving the lives of youth. Let's make their success a priority!

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND

DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. That the Metropolitan Council hereby goes on record as supporting the Office of Youth Safety and requesting Mayor Freddie O'Connell ensure that a long-term, sustainable approach to Youth Policy and a Strategic Plan that builds on past work and extends beyond the current mayoral administration. create an advisory working group with representatives from the Mayor's Office including the Director of Youth Initiatives and Department of Youth Safety, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, Metropolitan Council, NAZA and Power Youth, youth representatives, nonprofit organizations associated with youth services, and other stakeholders to agree on a permanent coordinating mechanism for youth that will be housed within the Metropolitan Government.

Section 2. That the Office of Youth Safety should follow through on plans to establish an advisory working group composed of representatives from inside and outside of the metropolitan government. outcomes of this working group should include a long-term vision and goals to establish a coordinating model that supports a long-term Youth Policy and Strategic Plan that contains policies and strategic priorities that can sustain across mayoral administrations.

Section 3. That the work of the Office of Youth Safety and the advisory working group should build on reports composed and published by previous mayoral administrations. Metropolitan Council requests that a gap analysis to examine data on youth populations, employment, and key social determinants that can identify patterns and disparities at the neighborhood level be funded as part of the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 operating budget and a local research institution be engaged to conduct the research and produce a gap analysis report.

Section 4. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.