



Regional Budget Hearings 2017

When you arrive: You will sign up to speak outside the hearing and receive a number; people will speak in the order of the sign up. If you multiply your number by 3 (the minutes each person before you will have), you'll get an idea of how long you will need to wait until your turn. Pay attention when your number gets close – legislators ask for speakers to be ready to hop up as soon as their name is called (also pay attention for your name—they don't always get the pronunciation correct...).

Remember: the legislators at these hearings are members of the money committees—they are holding hearings to learn what the public thinks about the budget, what's in it now, and what kind of budget they'd like to see come out of the 2017 session. A few things that all budget testimony should include:

- First, make sure to introduce yourself and what city/town you live in before you begin.
- If you use the talking points below, you do not have to include all of them in your statement: pick 2 or 3 main points, and if possible, illustrate your point with a personal example that represents youth who stay with community and family in a positive light.
- Always have a clear “ask.” In this case, we are asking legislators to continue their commitment to investing in community-based supports for juvenile-justice-involved youth.
- Be sure to keep strictly under the 3-minute time limit: there will be a timer on site, and you will be cut off if you go over. It's best PRACTICE and to time yourself ahead of time, and leave yourself a cushion of time to account for reading slowly, etc.
- That said: take your time – speak or read your statement clearly and not too fast. Speak into the microphone.
- When you conclude, be sure to THANK legislators for their time.

Talking Points on Juvenile Justice:

- Last session, the General Assembly took a bold step in a positive direction by committing to closing Beaumont juvenile correctional center and reinvesting the savings from that closure into a comprehensive set of family- and community-based alternatives that improve kids' outcomes and keep communities safer. **We ask you to maintain this commitment to DJJ building out a community-based system of care during the coming session.**
- This reinvestment strategy was supported by a strong, bipartisan commitment—the General Assembly realized and responded to what we know with certainty: our juvenile prisons do not work. We have been investing \$150,000 per year per youth in our juvenile prisons, and our return on investment thus far has been a 75% recidivism rate: in the three years after they are released, 75% of our youth are re-arrested. **We thank you all for understanding so clearly that this old way of doing business was not a smart investment—not in our youth, not in our communities, and not of our tax dollars.**
- Our communities desperately need the kinds of services the reinvestment of those funds will provide: substance abuse treatment, wraparound services for youth and families, and the evidence-based strategies that steer kids back on the right track and keep them connected to family, education, and positive supports.
- **Our juvenile justice system can deliver accountability and rehabilitation using a community-centric model, rather than a model based on isolation and confinement.** Youth Advocate Programs is one such model: this non-profit successfully kept 86% of participants arrest-free while involved in the program, according to the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation Center. Treatment Foster Care and Functional Family Therapy programs are also intensive family-based services that dramatically reduce delinquency and recidivism.
- It cannot be overstated: **children and youth do better when living with families and connected to their schools, communities, and other positive networks, and community-based programs enjoy broad public support:** recent polling conducted by GBA Strategies shows the vast majority of Virginians support community-based alternatives aimed at rehabilitation and prevention instead of simply locking up kids.
- [Share a personal example of either 1) how the lack of community services in your area has pushed young people into the deep end of the system, 2) how family and community-based supports has worked in your area, 3) why “prisons don’t work” is a meaningful statement to you/your family/your community.