



Young Democrats of Maryland

2024 Policy Platform

Young Democrats of Maryland's (YDM) mission is to serve the next generation of Marylanders and represent their interests both within the Democratic party and in the state policy making process. Given the diversity of Maryland youth, YDM intentionally grapples with policy from an equity and inclusion lens, and we strive to focus on the issues relevant to young people and the policies that will protect future generations.

We believe that young Marylanders deserve a fair shot at life. That includes the ability to earn a world-class education, to pursue a career with family-sustaining wages, to access affordable housing, healthcare, childcare, transportation, and other basic needs, and the opportunity to live in sustainable and safe communities. We recognize young Marylanders' autonomy to make their own decisions about their future and their health. We know it is with the support of leaders in Annapolis that young people will be able to tackle the most challenging problems facing our state.

We hope that legislative leaders will advance the priorities outlined in this platform in order to better serve young people, to preserve the bright future of our state, and to tackle the systemic inequities that we face.

We look forward to a productive legislative session working in partnership with members of the Maryland General Assembly, local leaders from across Maryland, progressive advocacy organizations, and young Democratic leaders from across Maryland.

With questions about this platform or to get involved with YDM's Legislative and Policy Committee or local chapters, please reach out to Vice President of Political Affairs Melissa Bender at melissa.e.bender@gmail.com.

Education

It is YDM's sincere, deeply held belief that every child — regardless of zip code, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, language, citizenship status, race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion — deserves access to a high quality education. We support policies that:

- Strengthen and invest in our public education system, including implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future with fidelity and supporting Maryland's public two and four year colleges
- Promote inclusive curricula
- Prevent childhood and youth hunger
- Elevate and empower youth voices on county boards of education
- Champion teachers and staff

Healthcare, Youth Mental Health, and Reproductive Rights

YDM firmly believes that healthcare is a fundamental human right and supports policies that promote access to affordable, comprehensive healthcare for all, including policies that:

- Insure more Marylanders
- Tackle youth substance abuse and expand youth mental health access, including at school-based providers
- Strengthen the healthcare workforce pipeline
- Establish parity for mental and behavioral health care
- Protect reproductive rights

Climate Action and Environmental Justice

YDM understands that climate change is an existential threat and that the youth of today and tomorrow will disproportionately suffer from political inaction. We support policies to:

- Hold polluters accountable
- Prioritize environmental justice and ensure access to clean air, water, and soil
- Accelerate the transition to a renewable energy grid
- Promote smart development strategies, including mixed use development; accessible, efficient public transportation; and walkable communities

Labor Rights and Caregiving Infrastructure

YDM strongly supports the labor movement and the rights of workers to organize and fight for dignified workplaces that acknowledge employees' role as both workers and caregivers. We support policies to:

- Allow graduate students to unionize and collectively bargain for better pay and working conditions
- Implement paid family leave strongly and swiftly
- Improve access to affordable childcare
- Protect employees regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression
- Safeguard child influencers

Housing Affordability

YDM affirms that housing is a human right, and believes that Maryland has a major housing shortage, impacting young people's ability to live independently and to start and support a family. We support policies to:

- Ensure sufficient affordable housing stock and expand housing supply
- Protect tenants' rights
- Build mixed use development located near public transit
- Monitor and enforce housing health and safety conditions

Public Safety and Gun Violence Prevention

YDM believes that young people deserve to feel safe in their schools and communities and to live in environments free from gun violence. YDM supports policies to:

- Fight the scourge of gun violence that is killing young people across Maryland.
- Ensure that at-risk young people have the juvenile services that they need to become successful in life and that we move past the policies of mass incarceration
- Uphold children's right to counsel and keep justice-involved youth connected to family and community