



City of New Bedford

Office of City Council

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Steven Martins

City Council President - 2012

Councillor Ward Two

July 08, 2016

Charlie Baker, Governor
Governor's Office
State House – Rm. 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker:

My name is Steven Martins, Councillor Ward Two in the City of New Bedford. I am writing to you today because I am a strong believer in the SouthCoast Youth Court programs and have always urged others to continue supporting this effort. Youth Court has provided many of our young people an effective and positive alternative to the traditional juvenile court process.

In partnership with SouthCoast Youth Courts, our schools have been able to address problem behaviors for more than 1,885 youth ages 8 to 16 years old, without taxing our City agencies and State services. Additionally, Youth Court provides appropriate consequences coupled with support services that enable students to truly make amends for the harm they have caused, learn from their mistakes and then use the support services to become successful students in our schools and community.

Early intervention and a holistic approach can better serve today's youth, especially on issues of behavior, discipline, violence, personal safety and substance use. Youth Court has proven to be an effective alternative to suspension when a student acts out; it keeps a child in school and learning, while applying appropriate sanctions to keep them on the right path. I have seen first-hand that Youth Court is helping our at-risk youth.

Youth Courts also offer an incredibly unique experience for high school volunteers to develop a service ethic while participating in a real life process. Youth Court provides high school students with the opportunity to learn and practice public speaking and critical thinking skills on a weekly basis in a real courtroom. Clearly this program is rewarding for the volunteers as well as making a difference in the lives of the respondents.

I am pleased to be involved in this program and urge others in the community to support their efforts. It is a true community collaboration. By addressing issues of attendance, academics and behaviors, I am convinced that Youth Court has benefited students who might otherwise have dropped out of school.

Funded by Federal and State grants, I am aware that New Bedford Youth Court is struggling to stay alive. Please keep South Coast Youth Courts in the budget because it serves as a valuable tool in teaching young offenders that there are consequences for their actions and has proven to be a cost-effective method of keeping juveniles out of the court system.

I will continue to advocate for this worthwhile program.

Yours truly,

Steven Martins,
Councillor Ward Two

SM: rrr

cc: Karyn Polito, Lt. Governor, State House – Rm. 280, Boston, MA 02133
Terri Belliveau, SouthCoast Youth Courts and Insight Services, 360 Coggeshall Street, New Bedford, MA 02740
File

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