



February 27, 2023

Rep. Sandra Feist  
409 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Feist, ,

Bolder Options is grateful for the support it has received from the State of Minnesota over the years. The funding we currently receive from the YIP grant is one of our largest annual grants and has supported us in having a long-term impact on Minnesota young people, with measurable outcomes. With additional funding from a bill like HF1712, programs like ours could do even more to prevent youth involvement in criminal and juvenile justice systems, and to provide positive opportunities for youth who have found themselves involved in those systems already.

Bolder Options youth increased their decision-making skills and improved school attendance. 87.5% of youth who graduated at the end of the year agreed they had accomplished at least one goal they set for themselves; 75% of our graduating youth report that they make good decisions. At the heart of the Bolder Options experience is the commitment made by each pair to complete the three physical challenges, where mentors help model how to set and incrementally work towards challenging goals. Our staff is available to address challenges in the mentoring relationships and frequently provides referrals to youth and their families to access housing, food, healthcare, and other community resources through our partnering agencies and organizations.

Bolder Options is celebrating 30 years in 2023. This kind of longevity means that we're starting to see generations of folks come through the program. After seeing the impact Bolder Options mentorship had on her younger brothers, Chaleiah decided to become a mentor herself! In our Rochester program, we recently had our first mentee come back and apply to be a mentor. As you know, a parent of Bolder Options youth recently led a cartooning class for current pairs. And we have former mentees, caregivers, and mentors on our Bolder Options staff team. This is just one example of the thousands of lives we can impact thanks to supporters like YIPA.

During our milestone year, we are looking back at where we have been but we know that our focus needs to be on the future. Kids in our community need our program today perhaps more than ever. We urge our representatives to go deep with your support for youth programs this session. Thriving kids leads to a thriving community - now is the time to make significant investments in the future of our young people.

Sincerely,

Darrell Thompson  
President