

# Youth Policy Forum - Event Summary

June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2:30 – 4:30pm | Capitol Ridge Best Western

Co-hosted by:



Youth  
Funders  
Network

The Youth Policy Forum brought together over 130 youth policy stakeholders - including young people, policy advocates, and policymakers – to reflect on youth policy in the 2017 legislative session: successes, challenges, and next steps to continue improving Minnesota’s youth policy.

## Our Day Included:

- **Welcome & Legislative Session Recap:** Denise Mayotte, Youth Funders Network & The Sheltering Arms Foundation; and Kari Denissen Cunnien, Ignite Afterschool
- **Policymaker Panel:** Bharti Wahi - Children’s Defense Fund (Moderator); Daron Korte - Minnesota Department of Education; Representative Dave Pinto; Senator Eric Pratt; and Jacob Schimetz - Minnesota Youth Council
- **Policy Advocate Panel:** Marcus Pope, Youthprise (Moderator); Erik Skold, Sprockets & Ignite Afterschool; Muneer Karcher-Ramos, St. Paul Promise Neighborhood; Paul Meunier, Youth Intervention Program Association (YIPA); and Sara Benzkofer, MnAEYC-MnSACA
- **Youth-Led Discussions:** Small group discussions facilitated by youth from the Brooklyns Youth Council and Minneapolis Youth Congress
- **Final Reflection & Closing:** Greg Herzog, Youth Funders Network & Office of Justice Programs

## Welcome & Legislative Session Recap

Kari set the stage by laying out the shared values that unite youth policy stakeholders:

1. Every young person deserves opportunity to realize their fullest potential.
2. Young people have many strengths, abilities and assets that - when given concrete opportunity and space- contribute to our communities.
3. Community, family and culture are fundamental to a young person’s identity.
4. We believe we are stronger together.

After reminding participants of the big picture, Kari dove into the details and legislative outcome of key youth policy bills in 2017:

- Afterschool Community Learning Grants: No appropriation
- Community Education Levy: level funding (no new \$)
- Education Partnerships Grants: + \$3.5 million/ biennium
- Childcare Assistance (CCAP) Policy Reforms: No reimbursement increase, but positive reforms and + \$9.3 million/ biennium
- Youth at Work Program: - \$1 million/ biennium
- Youth Intervention Programs Funding: level funding (no new \$)

## Policymaker Panel



- Jacob: “Youth need to be involved in the legislature’s decision-making process. How can you target funding to genuine needs unless you talk to those you’re trying to help?”
- Daron: “It’s good to see 1/3 of the total surplus went to Education. The bad news is afterschool and youth programs continue to be ignored as a priority issue among legislators.”
- Rep. Pinto: “I was pleased to see integrated approaches to youth policy – we need to move in that direction.”
- Sen. Pratt: “I encourage advocates to think of public-private partnership funding models for youth programs - the legislature unfortunately isn’t a reliable source of funding.”

## Policy Advocate Panel

- Erik: “We’re hearing support for integrated approaches to policy – we need to be united in messaging how our policies fit together as a continuum of supports for youth as they grow.”
- Muneer: “Youth got some funding, but it’s not enough - we need to look at the underlying causes of educational inequities, including housing, jobs, and the condition of communities.”
- Paul: “We know investing in people when they’re young saves public money down the road – the legislature didn’t listen this session but we need to keep making that case.”
- Sara: “Building the capacity of those in the field and parents to advocate is critical. For youth policy to be heard, we have to embrace a grassroots approach.”



## Youth-Led Group Discussion Themes

Young people facilitated small group discussions to pull out participants’ key takeaways and next steps.

The most common next steps that arose in the discussions were:

- Offer more advocacy trainings to youth and youth stakeholders
- Come together around a unified set of policy priorities and messages
- Grow the movement to include more grassroots – parents, youth, community members
- Host ongoing and statewide opportunities to discuss and shape a shared youth policy strategy
- Elevate voices of youth who benefit from these programs – amplify their stories

