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**YOUTHBUILD JUST A START STUDENTS ADVOCATE FOR FUNDING AT  
THE 30TH ANNUAL YOUTHBUILD DAY AT THE STATE HOUSE**

**Cambridge, MA — March 19, 2025** — On Thursday, March 13, 2025, [YouthBuild Just A Start](#) students joined peers from across Massachusetts at the 30th annual YouthBuild Day at the State House. The event highlighted the impact of YouthBuild programs on the lives of young people across the state. Participants met with dozens of elected officials in the house and senate to advocate for level funding of all YouthBuild programs. Organized by the [Massachusetts YouthBuild Coalition](#), the event brought together 11 YouthBuild programs dedicated to supporting opportunity youth in achieving educational, vocational, and leadership success. This year also marked the largest YouthBuild State House Day in history, with YouthBuild Just A Start leading the way as one of the largest groups in attendance with 30 young people.

The day began in the Hall of Flags, where students heard from YouthBuild Global President & CEO John Valverde, Massachusetts YouthBuild Coalition leadership, program alumni, Senators Pavel Payano and Adam Gomez, and Representatives Manny Cruz and Bud Williams. Following the gathering, two YouthBuild Just A Start participants were nominated to attend a special convening of the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus, where they met with elected officials and learned about the caucus' legislative priorities.

For the remainder of the afternoon, YouthBuild Just A Start students met directly with legislators to advocate for level funding in fiscal year 2026, engaging in discussions with the offices of the following elected officials:

- **Representatives:** Mike Connolly, Marjorie Decker, Paul Donato, Judith Garcia, Joe McGonagle, Michael Moran, Steve Owens, Dave Rogers, Dan Ryan, Steve Ultrino
- **Senators:** William Brownsberger, Sal DiDomenico, Lydia Edwards, Jason Lewis

These meetings provided students with the opportunity to share their personal experiences, highlight the impact of YouthBuild, and stress the importance of sustained investment in the program.

“Ever since YouthBuild started, I have been a more motivated person,” **said a current participant shared with Senator William Brownsberger’s staff.** “High school was not for me, and construction drew me in because I like hands-on work. It has changed my mindset, and I am ready to get up and work.”

During the meetings, YouthBuild Just A Start students presented YouthBuild Champion Awards to Senator Jason Lewis and Representative Steve Owens for their dedicated support of YouthBuild programs and opportunity youth.

“Seeing the way people tell me how YouthBuild has changed their life is so moving,” **said Representative Steve Owens upon receiving the award.** “I am a big believer in the program and I am really honored to get this award.”

“It was wonderful to meet with YouthBuild Just A Start students to discuss their invaluable experiences with the program and to welcome them to the State House,” said **State Senator Jason Lewis**. “YouthBuild programs empower young people and help them to become leaders and find success in their careers. I am proud to continue supporting their critical mission and was honored to receive a YouthBuild Champion Award.”

Just A Start, parent organization of YouthBuild Just A Start, is proud of the students for reinforcing the vital role YouthBuild programs play in empowering young people and strengthening communities across Massachusetts.



YouthBuild Just A Start students presenting Representative Steve Owens with the YouthBuild Champion Award



YouthBuild Just A Start students presenting Senator Jason Lewi with the YouthBuild Champion Award



YouthBuild Just A Start students meeting with Senator William Brownsberger and staff



YouthBuild Just A Start students meeting with Representative Dan Ryan’s staff

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**About Just A Start:**

Just A Start believes that access to stable housing and sustainable careers are the essential building blocks of equitable communities. For more than 50 years, we have focused on meeting the fundamental needs of individuals and families who have been systematically denied opportunities to realize their full



potential. Our programs include affordable housing, education and job training, and comprehensive support services, spanning Cambridge and beyond. **YouthBuild Just A Start** is a full-time, comprehensive youth workforce development program for ages 16-24 in the Boston Metro North region. As a proud member of the global YouthBuild movement, the program supports young people as they reclaim their education, gain job skills, and become community leaders. For more information, please visit [www.justastart.org/youth-programs](http://www.justastart.org/youth-programs).