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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
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**Testimony in Support of HB522 - School Resource Officers and School Security Employees  
- Revisions**

HB522 prohibits a school administrator or school safety coordinator from directing a school resource officer (SRO) or school security employee to enforce a school's code of conduct, unless there is a threat of serious bodily injury that cannot be addressed through other interventions and supports.

The school-to-prison pipeline is defined as the practices that push a student out of school and into the criminal justice system, and it is real in Maryland. According to a MSDE report on school arrest data, 3,141 students were arrested in Maryland schools in the 2018-2019 school year. 56% of students arrested were black, 61% were low-income, and 22% were special education students. Also, 33% of students were arrested for non-violent offenses.

The idea behind HB522 is simple – enforcement of school code of conduct policies should originate with teachers or school administrators, not from SROs or other school security employees. SROs and school security employees should be solely responsible for protecting our students from threats, de-escalating violent situations, and promoting a positive school climate, all of which they still would be able to do under this bill. Prohibiting SROs and school security employees from intervening in these situations will hopefully result in a reduction of school-related arrests and the school-to-prison pipeline.

Over the course of the past several weeks, we also worked with key stakeholders to draft significant improvements to this legislation. Included in the current version of the bill are:

- Clearer roles for administrators and SROs,
- Additional training on restorative practices,
- A robust school safety & behavioral health plan,
- Comprehensive approach to the assignment of SROs,
- Reassigning SROs who are under investigation for use of excessive force,
- More options for SRO grant funds,
- Additional data collection on incidents, and more.

HB522 represents a comprehensive, thorough approach to address the safety and behavioral health needs of our students, while also providing a much needed clarification of roles between school security and administrators. For these reasons, I respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB 522.