



## HB522 PUBLIC SCHOOLS - SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS - PROHIBITED CONDUCT

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EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

### LETTER OF INFORMATION

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports **HB522 Public Schools - School Resource Officers - Prohibited Conduct**. This bill prohibits a school administrator or official or a school safety coordinator from directing a school resource officer (SRO) to enforce discipline-related school policies, rules, regulations, or procedures. It also bars an SRO from unilaterally enforcing discipline-related school policies, rules, regulations, or procedures, and requires that training provided to them reflect that prohibition.

AACPS recognizes the contributions SROs are making in schools across the State to benefit school climate, culture, and safety. We also recognize the need to pursue expanded training of SROs, principals, behavioral health staff, and teachers on the best classroom and school-based practices to maintain safe and supportive schools conducive to learning. As such, AACPS supported HB522, as introduced, in order to clarify the reasonable prohibition on SROs from unilaterally enforcing discipline-related school policies, rules, regulations, or procedures to ensure that SROs do not make determinations regarding student discipline. As introduced, this legislation was aligned with Maryland's training program for SROs and therefore the policies and procedures that should already be in place regarding the appropriate role of SROs as it relates to students, educators, and administrators, and student disciplinary actions.

AACPS appreciates the sponsor's willingness to work with advocates during the subcommittee review and amendment process. However, AACPS has concerns with language on page 6 of the bill which would allow any SRO to implement a student code of conduct. This new language contradicts the intent of the legislation, which is to ensure that SROs are not involved in student disciplinary matters or enforce a student code of conduct as this is not and should not be the role of an SRO. Currently, SROs do not make determinations regarding student discipline. AACPS has policies and procedures in place regarding such interactions with SROs and law enforcement. If there has been a criminal law violated, adjudication is referred to law enforcement to address the criminal aspect of the behavior and a school administrator makes a disciplinary determination in pursuant to our policies, procedures, and the AACPS Code of Student Conduct. In accordance with a student's due process rights and current policies and procedures, it is the school administrator who makes the final school determination regarding student discipline. Once such a determination is made, AACPS policy affords a student appeal rights. Accordingly, AACPS recommends that this language be amended as follows:

**(C) (1) (I) A SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER MAY NOT ENFORCE AND A SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR OR OFFICIAL OR SCHOOL SAFETY COORDINATOR MAY NOT DIRECT A SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER TO INTERVENE IN A MATTER ENFORCE A SCHOOL'S STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT UNLESS:**

**1. A SERIOUS BODILY INJURY, AS DEFINED UNDER COMAR 13A.08.03.02, WITH AN IMMINENT THREAT OF SERIOUS HARM HAS OCCURRED; OR**

**2. TO PREVENT AN IMMINENT THREAT OF SERIOUS BODILY INJURY, AS DEFINED UNDER COMAR 13A.08.03.02, TO OTHER STUDENTS 23 OR STAFF THAT CANNOT BE REDUCED OR ELIMINATED THROUGH OTHER 24 INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS.**

AACPS appreciates additional clarification to help ensure that the role of an SRO in schools is not construed in a manner that is overly broad. Regular conversation and rapport among students, administrators, staff, SROs and other law enforcement are essential to ensure a more holistic, contextual view of student behavior. These interactions help to facilitate ongoing relationships that create safer school climates among student, administrators, staff, SROs and law enforcement.

AACPS also has concerns with the new conditions placed on the use of school safety grant funding to prohibit the combined use of these funds for SROs and the expansion of school-based mental health services and behavioral supports. AACPS supports the continuation of the school safety grant program, and additional resources for the hiring of additional school counselors, school psychologists, and other services, and does not believe these investments should be mutually exclusive. AACPS recognizes the importance of promoting the positive mental health of all students through the development of impactful relationships and by teaching resilience. Student mental health is of particular importance during this time when AACPS students are faced with a global health pandemic and social unrest. School counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, pupil personnel workers, and school nurses collaborate with staff, parents/guardians, and the community to overcome barriers to learning.

Thank you for consideration of this information regarding HB522.