



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB522 - School Resource Officers - Prohibited Conduct

HB522 prohibits a school administrator or school safety coordinator from directing a school resource officer (SRO) or school security employee to participate in the routine school discipline of a student.

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 discipline 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 participating in the routine school discipline of a student will hopefully result in a reduction of school-related arrests and the school-to-prison pipeline. If our teachers believe they need more resources or assistance in administering school discipline policies, we should focus our efforts on promoting and funding training in restorative practices.

Finally, I want to address some concerns I have received on this bill related to how to define “routine school discipline”. Currently, the State of Maryland allows each LEA to set their school discipline policies in their own student conduct codes. Most of these student conduct codes detail different levels of discipline infractions and recommended responses to each infraction. I have proposed legislation in the past to regulate how school discipline is defined in these conduct codes, but the local school systems have insisted on maintaining control over them.

I respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB 522.