



*"Being here for Maryland's Children, Youth, and Families"*

**Testimony submitted to House Ways and Means Committee**

**February 3, 2021**

**House Bill 522 - Public School – School Resource Officers – Prohibited Conduct  
Support**

The Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus, which represents a network of Bureaus throughout the State of Maryland, Supports HB 522 – Public School – School Resource Officers – Prohibited Conduct. Youth Service Bureaus are Community Based programs that work with youth and their families to decrease the likelihood of youth involvement or re-involvement with the Department of Juvenile Services. This bill will ensure that youth are not needlessly brought into the juvenile justice system for a school related problem that should be resolved by a school disciplinary action. We believe that this action corresponds with the State’s movement toward a juvenile system that is developmentally informed.

This bill will impact what is known as the “School to Prison Pipeline” as it will directly limit the involvement of School Resource Officers in incidents that do not pose a danger to the school. A study at the University of Maryland examined the impact of School resource Officers on schools and students. The researchers referenced other studies that have found that police presence in schools relates to increased rates of arrests and juvenile justice referrals (Curtis, 2013); that school-related arrests are often for minor misbehaviors rather than actions that endanger other students (Redfield & Nance, 2016; Wolf, 2013), and that black students, male students, and students with disabilities (SWD) are arrested disproportionately (USDE-OCR, 2014; Wolf, 2013). The University of Maryland researchers found similar trends in Maryland schools (<https://education.umd.edu/research/centers/mep/research/k-12-education/when-law-enforcement-meets-school-discipline-school>).

This bill also presents a developmentally informed approach to juvenile justice which recognizes the need to hold youth accountable for their actions while also offering them the resources and opportunities to divert them from involvement with the juvenile justice system. It recognizes that youth are still maturing and that their brains are not fully developed until after age 24. Students who violate school policies and procedures do need to be disciplined and held accountable for their actions, but not in a manner that moves them toward involvement with the juvenile justice system. Based on Maryland Department of Education Data, over 3,100 arrests were made in Maryland schools in the 2018-2019 school year. The rates of arrests in schools varied widely from county to county, perhaps indicating that the use of arrests is not uniform across the state.

A developmentally informed system is also fair and works to ensure that all youth receive fair and equal treatment. This bill will assist the State of Maryland in addressing racial and ethnic disparities (RED) found in the rates of arrests of youth of color by School Resource Officers. Data in Maryland shows that youth of color are disproportionately impacted by the presence of School Resource Officers in schools. Based on MSDE data, 60% of school arrests are youth of color. This bill will help ensure fair treatment for youth of color as currently they are more likely to face arrests in school.

MAYSB believes that following a developmental informed approach to juvenile justice is important as it works to establish a fair and equal system for all youth and allows youth the opportunity to be held accountable for their actions while also offering them the resources to develop into to productive and responsible adults.

We ask that you give this legislation a favorable finding.

Respectfully Submitted:

Liz Park, PhD  
MAYSB Chair  
[lpark@greenbeltmd.gov](mailto:lpark@greenbeltmd.gov)

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2020/0623/ArrestsSchoolPremises06232020.pdf>