



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of
House Bill 157: Public Schools – Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures – Increase
(School Safety Enhancement Act of 2024)**

Appropriations Committee

Position: Oppose

January 30, 2024

Strong Schools Maryland, a member of the Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD), advocates for full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. CRSD unites advocates, community members, and service providers to transform Maryland's discipline practices. As such, **Strong Schools Maryland urges an unfavorable vote on HB 157**, which proposes doubling annual appropriations from \$10 million to \$20 million to expand law enforcement in Maryland public schools.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a World-Class public school system, emphasizing the importance of a safe learning environment through restorative practices as a means to create a sense of safety and social responsibility. The proposed legislation not only fails to support this vision, but also risks promoting discrimination and trauma instead of the claimed safety it proposes.

Research shows that police presence in our schools does not protect our students from crimes such as school shootings, but rather further marginalizes students and limits the students' feelings of belongingness.¹ The presence of school resource officers **disproportionately impacts** Black students and students with disabilities. In the 2021-2022 school year, Black students received 61% of school arrests in Maryland, despite being only a third of the student population; further, 28% of students arrested participate in IEPs despite comprising 12.4% of the student population.²

How do we approach school safety in a productive manner? Data shows that **the use of restorative practices** – not increased law enforcement – improves outcomes for students and overall school safety; we see this right here in Maryland. Baltimore City released a report summarizing the impact of employing restorative practices in schools; school suspensions dropped by 44%, 72% of staff reported improved school climate, and much more.³

¹ [O'Neill and McGloin, 2007](#)

² [MSDE 2021](#)

³ [Restorative Practises in Baltimore City School, 2020](#)

Legislation passed that impacts students and children should promote trust between the school and students. Additional funding for a school resource officer contradicts the Blueprint's commitment to the restorative practices of the highest-achieving schools in the world that we know to be effective. We urge this committee to reject HB 157 and focus on advancing legislation that aligns with the promises Maryland has made to all students.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 157.

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