

SB 819

Uploaded by: Dr. Marvin Cheatham

Position: FAV

Here is my written Testimony.

"Action: 2024-02-08 - Hearing 2/28 at 1:00 p.m.

Pending: [Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee](#)

Hearing: Feb 28 @ 1:00 pm Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Hearing

IN SUPPORT OF MARYLAND BILL S.B. 819.

The over 36,000 Officers, Members and Residents of the Matthew Henson Community Development Corporation strongly support the much-needed Public School Resource Officers to be armed in Baltimore City Public Schools similar to all other MD Public School jurisdictions. Aren't our children, teachers, faculty, and parents just as worthy as all others in Maryland Schools?

I have unsuccessfully tried to change my Password with MYMGA, as directed, but after over a dozen email attempts and responses to directives by MYMGA this past weekend, I have not been successful in changing my password to submit my written testimony. TIME IS WINDING DOWN AND I STRONGLY DESIRE TO BE PRESENT TESTIFYING ON THE 28TH OF FEBRUARY 2024!!!

I was the Lead Plaintiff in the Winning MD and Baltimore City NAACP Class-Action Lawsuit in 2006 Against then Baltimore City Mayor Martin O'Malley for ILLEGAL ARRESTS of over 100,000 black and brown men. So I am very cautious and careful regarding supporting questionable actions that are not warranted. Please accept my testimony for **YOUR** MYMGA computer process in NOT correctly responding for me to submit my written document and give my verbal testimony. Your MYMGA system is not appropriately responding!

Baltimore City School Police Gun's Recovery is an astonishing: 2023-24 *11 (so far); 2022-23 *15; 2021-22 *15; 2020-21; 2019-20 Pandemic; 2018-19 *10; 2017-18 *5.

Baltimore City Shootings outside school areas: Mergenthaler March 8, 2023, Death; Achievement Academy Nov. 11, 2019; Patterson Sept. 7, 2023, DEATH; Carver Sept. 7, 2022; Edmondson March 11, 2023, DEATH; Forest Park Jan. 25, 2023 DEATH; Dunbar Sept. 1, 2023, 12-year-old shot; Carver Dec. 5, 2023, Triple Shooting; Carver May 20, 2022.

Since 2015 George Washington Carver Vocational Technical Senior High School has had six (6) guns confiscated from inside the school.

MHCDC has two schools in our immediate catchment area: Matthew Alexander Henson Elementary School and George Washington Carver Vocational Technical Senior High School. To paraphrase a quote from the Godfather movie; we are going to hold MD Senators and Delegates accountable, and publicly name names, of all that do not protect our children, faculty, staff, and parents! THIS IS AN ACCIDENT WAITING TO HAPPEN BY GUNS BEING USED IN OUR SCHOOLS!!!

WE URGE STRONG SUPPORT OF THIS MUCH NEEDED BILL. The majority of the 17 candidates that we received responses from, that are seeking to be the next Baltimore City Mayor, have clearly indicated their support for armed Baltimore City Resource Officers.

We beg our Senators and Delegates to pass this legislation. We have exhausted all means through MYMGA to get this properly processed. Will someone please call me. I will be in the Wilmer Eye Hospital starting at 8:000 a.m. Monday, February 26, 2024 for an urgently

SB0819_Testimony_2A_Maryland.pdf

Uploaded by: John Josselyn

Position: FAV



2A Maryland

2A@2AMaryland.org

**Senate Bill 819
Public Schools – School Resource Officers – Firearms Required
FAVORABLE**

Senate Bill 819 appears to be a legislated resolution to conflicting directives relating to the duties of School Resource Officers within the Baltimore City School System.

Maryland's Safe to Learn Act of 2018 mandates either the assignment of a School Resource Officer (SRO) or adequate law enforcement coverage for each individual school within each of Maryland's twenty-four local school systems. It is the decision of each local school system to determine how they will fulfill this mandate.

Source: <https://news.maryland.gov/mcss/2020/10/08/the-many-roles-of-a-maryland-sro/>

School Based Officer Updated Responsibilities:

1. Law enforcement officer- although a less performed role, the school police officer is still law enforcement officer with the authority to handle crimes and make arrests and diversions when necessary. It is important to differentiate between routine school discipline and criminal behavior. School police officers should not be involved in routine discipline, but *should take the lead on serious criminal violations*. (Emphasis added) (Part I offenses such as homicide, robbery, rape, aggravated assault, theft, stolen autos and Part II crimes in progress such as common assault, trespassing and disorderly conduct.

Source: Officer Responsibilities – Baltimore City Public Schools

<https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/page/school-police>

The school system cannot have it both ways. An SRO is either a police officer assigned to the school to protect the students or a quasi police officer/guidance counselor. In the current environment, it is unrealistic to expect the SRO to fulfill both roles. An unarmed RSO is nothing more than another unarmed victim in an already target rich environment of defenseless victims. The SRO deserve better for it is they and not the academics who will be in the line of fire.

We respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 819.

John H. Josselyn
2A Maryland
02/28/2024

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MEMO

To: All School Police Sworn Personnel
From: Akil L. Hamm, Sr. Acting Chief of School Police
Date: November 29, 2016
Re: School Based Officer Updated Responsibilities

SCHOOL BASED POLICE OFFICERS AND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOL POLICE AND SCHOOLS IS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN INCREASING SCHOOL SAFETY. THE CONCEPT OF HAVING A SCHOOL POLICE OFFICER IN OUR SCHOOLS STEMS FROM THE PRACTICE OF COMMUNITY POLICING. COMMUNITY POLICING UTILIZES THE ASSISTANCE OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING PROBLEMS AND DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS. THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY MAY INVOLVE THE CEO, CHIEFS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS, PRINCIPALS, ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF, CUSTODIANS, NURSES SOCIAL WORKERS, CUSTODIANS, CAFETERIA WORKERS, STUDENTS AND PARENTS. AS A SCHOOL POLICE OFFICER MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY PARTNER WITH US TO CREATE A WELCOMING SETTING THAT IS SAFE AND SECURE, WITH A FOCUS ON PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION THROUGH QUALITY RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND RAPPORT.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL POLICE VARY FROM SCHOOL TO SCHOOL. A DIVERSE RANGE OF DUTIES CAN BE INCORPORATED INTO THE SCHOOL POLICE OFFICER JOB DESCRIPTION. SOME FUNCTIONS SERVED BY THE SCHOOL POLICE OFFICER INCLUDE: LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER, PUBLIC SAFETY SPECIALIST, COMMUNITY LIAISON, PROBLEM SOLVER, LAW-RELATED EDUCATOR, AND POSITIVE ROLE MODEL.

- 1. LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER-** ALTHOUGH A LESS PERFORMED ROLE, THE SCHOOL POLICE OFFICER IS STILL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER WITH THE AUTHORITY TO HANDLE CRIMES AND MAKE ARRESTS AND DIVERSIONS WHEN NECESSARY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN ROUTINE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR. SCHOOL POLICE OFFICERS SHOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN ROUTINE DISCIPLINE, BUT SHOULD TAKE THE LEAD ON SERIOUS CRIMINAL VIOLATIONS. (PART I OFFENSES SUCH AS HOMICIDE, ROBBERY, RAPE, AGGRAVATED ASSAULT, THEFT, STOLEN AUTOS AND PART II CRIMES IN PROGRESS SUCH AS COMMON ASSAULT, TRESPASSING AND DISORDERLY CONDUCT.
- 2. DUTIES-** ADMINISTRATORS AND SCHOOL POLICE OFFICERS SHOULD HAVE A CONVERSATION AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH YEAR OR ASSIGNMENT ABOUT THE TYPES OF BEHAVIORS THAT WILL BE HANDLED BY ADMINISTRATORS. (NORMAL DISCIPLINARY INTERVENTIONS) AND THOSE INVOLVING CRIMINAL BEHAVIORS. WORKING TOGETHER, THE ADMINISTRATORS AND SCHOOL POLICE SHOULD COMMUNICATE CONTINUOUSLY. IF A SITUATION OCCURS, AND BOTH THE PRINCIPAL AND

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCHOOL POLICE ARE ON THE SCENE, THE PRINCIPAL CAN INDICATE THAT HE/SHE WILL HANDLE THE SITUATION OR REQUEST POLICE ASSISTANCE. IF THE SCHOOL POLICE DETERMINES THAT A SITUATION REQUIRES “POLICE” INTERVENTION, ADMINISTRATORS ARE NOT TO INTERFERE. TO DO SO, IS AGAINST THE LAW. IF AN ADMINISTRATOR IS IN DISAGREEMENT WITH THE OFFICER’S DECISION, A POST-CONFERENCE IS IN ORDER. AN ADMINISTRATOR CAN ALSO CONTACT A PERMANENT RANK SUPERVISOR AND HAVE THEM TO RESPOND TO THE SCHOOL. MEET WITH THE PRINCIPAL DAILY TO DISCUSS POTENTIAL SAFETY CONCERNS AND MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS. CONDUCT INTAKE OF STUDENTS BEING VISIBLE AT ALL TIMES. PATROLLING THE BUILDING AND GROUNDS AT ALL TIMES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY. CHECKING IN WITH ADMINISTRATORS THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL DAY AND CHECKING FOR SAFETY HAZARDS. BUILDING RAPPORT WITH THE STUDENT POPULATION, PARENTS AND THE ENTIRE SCHOOL COMMUNITY THROUGH QUALITY CONNECTED RELATIONSHIPS. SCHOOL POLICE OFFICERS SHOULD NOT FREQUENT THEIR OFFICES UNLESS THEY ARE CONDUCTING OFFICIAL BUSINESS SUCH AS WRITING A POLICE REPORT OR CONDUCTING AN OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION.

3. **POSITIVE ROLE MODEL-** ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL ROLE HELD BY A SCHOOL POLICE OFFICER IS THAT OF BEING A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL TO STUDENTS. STUDENTS OFTEN SEEK APPROVAL, DIRECTION AND GUIDANCE INFORMAL INTERACTIONS WITH SCHOOL POLICE OFFICER THAT THEY CAN TRUST. SOME WAYS FOR THE SCHOOL POLICE OFFICER TO BE A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL INCLUDE: SETTING LIMITS BY BEING

Attachment #1_SB_819_2A_Maryland
<https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/page/school-police>

CLEAR ABOUT WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE; SETTING AN EXAMPLE; BEING HONEST: BEING CONSISTENT WITH STUDENTS, STAFF AND PARENTS; ENCOURAGING APPEARANCE; BEING VISIBLE AND ACCESSIBLE; TAKE CONCERNS SERIOUSLY AND FOLLOW THROUGH WITH COMMITMENTS TO TAKE ACTION; PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL SUPPORT FUNCTIONS; MAINTAINING A RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS' PARENTS; AND MAINTAINING A RELATIONSHIP WITH FACULTY AND THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION.

- 4. LAW-RELATED EDUCATOR-** LAW-RELATED EDUCATION IS DESIGNED TO TEACH STUDENTS FUNDAMENTALS AND SKILLS TO BECOME RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY. LAW-RELATED EDUCATION TEACHES SOCIAL COMPETENCE, PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS, A SENSE OF AUTONOMY, AND REINFORCES HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH AND POSITIVE PEER NORMS. THIS SHOULD BE A FUN AND INTERESTING CLASS AND CAMPS WITH FIELD TRIPS, COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS, VISITS FROM JUVENILE JUSTICE REPRESENTATIVES, CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION, AND MOCK TRIALS OR PUBLIC PERFORMANCES. SCHOOL POLICE OFFICERS HAVE RECEIVED TRAINING FROM N.A.S.R.O. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS, D.A.R.E. DRUG ABUSES RESISTANCE EDUCATION, G.R.E.A.T. GANG RESISTANCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND TEEN DATING MATTERS (TEEN DATING VIOLENCE CLASS).

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

UPDATED SCHOOL POLICE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES MEMO

**I HAVE READ AND FULLY UNDERSTAND MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS A SCHOOL
POLICE OFFICER:**

MEMBER: (PRINT NAME/SEQ) _____

MEMBER (SIGNATURE/DATE) _____

SUPERVISOR (PRINT NAME) _____

SUPERVISOR (SIGNATURE/DATE) _____

Attachment #1_SB_819_2A_Maryland
<https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/page/school-police>

SB0819.pdf

Uploaded by: Suzanne Duffy

Position: FAV

WANT TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN? THEN PASS THIS GOOD, SAFETY DRIVEN AND LIFESAVING BILL, SUPPORT SB0819.

Suzanne Price
AACo, MD

2.26.24 MSEA Testimony SB819_UNFAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Christian Gobel

Position: UNF

UNFAVORABLE
Senate Bill 819
Public Schools – School Resource Officers – Firearms Required

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 28, 2024

Christian Gobel
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association strongly opposes Senate Bill 819. Senate Bill 819 requires a Baltimore City school police officer and a school resource officer to carry a firearm while present on school premises.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA believes it is of the utmost importance that students learn in a safe and healthy environment. Policymakers, communities, families, and educators must do all we can to prevent gun violence from wreaking havoc in our communities and our public schools. MSEA supports legislation that provides access to fully paid emergency response training for educators and legislation that provides access to mental health resources and counseling services for students and educators.

However, our union firmly believes that requiring school resource officers or school security employees to carry firearms as a preventative measure against armed intruders creates an unsafe environment, placing students and personnel at greater risk. National research confirms that the use of school resource officers does not reduce school shootings or gun related incidents.¹

¹ Sorensen, Lucy C., Montserrat Avila Acosta, John Engberg, and Shawn D. Bushway. (2021). The Thin Blue Line in Schools: New Evidence on School-Based Policing Across the U.S..



Policymakers must do all they can to enact proactive, common-sense gun safety laws to keep our communities and students safe. Last session, the General Assembly passed Jaelynn's Law, which is designed to bolster safe storage requirements for guns and limit access to firearms by minors. MSEA greatly appreciates legislators pursuing proactive gun safety policies, such as Jaelynn's Law, that will keep our communities and students safe.

Finally, MSEA believes continued public investment and implementation of expanded access to mental and behavioral health services for students is a much more effective approach to ensure the safety of students, rather than expanding the presence of guns on school premises. For these reasons, we oppose Senate Bill 819.

We urge the committee to issue an Unfavorable Report on Senate Bill 819.

2-28 SB 819. CRSD. Firearms Required - 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Gail Sunderman

Position: UNF

MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY and the ENVIRONMENT SENATE BILL 819: Public Schools – School Resources Officers – Firearms Required

DATE: February 28, 2024

POSITION: OPPOSE

The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD) brings together advocates, service providers, and community members dedicated to transforming school discipline practices within Maryland’s public school systems. CRSD is committed to the fair and equitable treatment of all students, including pregnant or parenting students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and socio-economic status, and reducing barriers to learning for all students. **CRSD opposes SB 819**, which requires a Baltimore City school police officer and a school resource officer to carry a firearm while on school premises.

Local control is a fundamental tenet in Maryland public policy. This bill violates that premise. This is the idea that each jurisdiction maintains control of the implementation of laws/policies to reflect the values and needs of its communities. Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) has a policing strategy that it deems is appropriate for creating a school environment that promotes school safety. Indeed, recent research on where shootings take place in Baltimore City found that shootings take place outside school buildings and that students feel safest in schools.¹

As the only local school system with its own dedicated police force, BCPS students experience greater police contact than any other student body across the state. The imposition of this law would only magnify that fact.

CRSD’s concern is threefold: (1) increasing the presence of lethally armed police officers in public schools would needlessly exacerbate the trauma experienced by many BCPS children; (2) the proposed legislation is a shift away from the proven restorative approaches BCPS has adopted; (3) policymakers will use the district’s limited resources to arm officers rather than prioritize needed educational and socio-emotional supports; and (4) arming school police is an unproven strategy for improving school safety.

As a Congressional Research Services report points out, the public response to issues of school safety and security too often focuses on violence prevention and incident response. The report notes: “. . . school safety and security also include issues related to bullying, harassment, childhood trauma, student mental health, substance abuse, school climate, and student discipline” all of which require different kinds of responses.² For example, Federal cross-agency efforts to address school violence have expanded to

¹ Bowie, L. & Vuttaluru, S. (February 2, 2023). How violent neighborhoods threaten otherwise safe Baltimore Schools. *Baltimore Banner*. <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/education/k-12-schools/shootings-near-baltimore-city-schools-PPIKB4DTKNCKBENO2CLFW4QUEY/>

² Congressional Research Service (August 10, 2021). *Federal support for school safety and security*. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46872/11>

support grant programs to increase mental health awareness among school-aged youth and school personnel and connect youth with mental health issues and their families to needed services. Other federal grant programs help local education agencies develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs and activities that foster safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments that support student academic achievement. Maryland needs more of these types of programs, not more guns in the schools.

There is a lack of meaningful data supporting the claim that arming school police increases school safety or lowers violent crime.³ On the other hand, there is substantial data that shows that even one instance of police contact increases the likelihood that a young person will have further involvement with the justice system, fall behind, and/or ultimately drop-out of school.⁴ Research also finds that a public health approach is the most effective way to address school safety.⁵

SB 819 undermines the intentions of the BCPS *Building A Generation: City Schools' Blueprint for Success*, which focuses on Student Wholeness and Staff Leadership, supports relationship-building pedagogy, and the implementation of restorative approaches to school discipline.⁶ Arming school police will not improve school safety or student well-being, and is likely to worsen school climate and student safety.

For more information contact: Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline
CRSDMaryland@gmail.com

CRSD Members:

The Choice Program at UMBC

Public Justice Center, Education Stability Project

Project HEAL (Health, Education, Advocacy, and Law) at Kennedy Krieger Institute.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

³ Congressional Research Service, School Resource Officers: Law Enforcement Officers in Schools, 2018, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45251/3>.

⁴ Devlin, D. N. & Fisher, B. W. (2021). An examination of school resources officers as an approach to reduce social disturbances in schools: Evidence from a national longitudinal study. *Journal of School Violence*, 2. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15388220.2021.1875843>

Gottfredson, D. C., Crosse, S., Tang, Z., Bauer, E. L., Harmon, M. A., Hagen, C.A., & Greene, A. D. (2020). Effects of school resource officers on school crime and responses to school crime. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 19:3. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1745-9133.12512>

Stephanie Ann Wiley, The Amplification of Deviance Following Police Contact: An Examination of Individual and Neighborhood Factors among a Sample of Youth, July 2, 2014, 35, <https://irl.umsl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1244&context=dissertation>.

⁵ Flannery, D. J., Fox, J. A., Wallace, L., Mulvey, E. & Modzeleski, W. (2020). Guns, school shooters, and school safety: What we know and directions for change. *School Psychology Review*: 50. 2-3. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1846458>

⁶ Baltimore City Public Schools. *Building a generation: City schools' Blueprint for Success*. <https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/page/blueprint>

Baltimore Alliance to Reclaim our Schools (AROS)

Youth, Education and Justice Clinic, University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law

Maryland Office of the Public Defender

Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts,

Disability Rights Maryland

ACLU of Maryland

YEJ Clinic – SB 819 (Oppose).pdf

Uploaded by: Jamie Polinsky

Position: UNF

CLINICAL LAW PROGRAM

**Testimony in *Opposition* of Senate Bill 819
Public Schools - School Resource Officers - Firearms Required**

To: Senator Brian J. Feldman, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Jamie Polinsky, Student Attorney, Youth, Education and Justice Clinic, University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, 500 W. Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201 (admitted to practice pursuant to Rule 19-220 of the Maryland Rules Governing Admission to the Bar)

Date: February 27, 2024

I am a student attorney in the Youth, Education and Justice Clinic (“the Clinic”) at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law. The Clinic represents children who have been excluded from school through suspension, expulsion, and other means, as well as individuals who are serving life sentences for crimes they committed when they were children (“juvenile lifers”) or young adults. I write in opposition to Senate Bill 819, which seeks to require Baltimore City school police officers to carry a firearm while present on the school premises.

The Baltimore Schools Police is a police force of over 140 officers working in schools across the Baltimore City School District. Armed school police officers create fear that makes it difficult for students to learn. Students feel that they are seen and treated as suspects.¹ As the National Association of School Psychologists explained ten years ago when warning against arming school personnel, “[s]tudents’ perception of safety is not a trivial consideration given that simply feeling unsafe impedes learning and the ability to develop a nurturing, supportive, and welcoming school environment.”²

These feelings of fear and suspicion are more acutely felt by Black and Brown students. Notably, Black and Latine students comprise nearly 90 % of the student population in Baltimore City Public Schools.³ Black and Brown children – and particularly Black

¹ Harold Jordan, *Don’t Arm School Police*, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE, Mar. 30, 2017, <https://www.post-gazette.com/opinion/Op-Ed/2017/03/30/Don-t-arm-school-police/stories/201703300082?pgpageversion=pgevoke>

² National Association of School Psychologists, *NASP Cautions Against Increasing Armed Security to Improve School Safety* (updated Jan. 16, 2013), <https://www.nasponline.org/x27125.xml>

³ Black and Brown children comprise 71% and 18.6%, respectively, of students currently enrolled in Baltimore City Schools. BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, CITY SCHOOLS AT A GLANCE, <https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/page/district-overview> (last visited Feb. 22, 2024).

children in Baltimore – have historically had negative relationships with law enforcement rooted in distrust, fear, and abuse. Black children are also more likely to have negative relationships with school police officers. Indeed, Black students in Maryland are disproportionately arrested in schools. In the 2021-2022 school year, Maryland’s Black students comprised approximately 33.2% of the overall student population⁴ but accounted for 61% of school-based arrests.⁵ In Baltimore specifically, all of the 35 students subjected to school-based arrests in the 2021-2022 school year were Black.⁶ These arrest demographics forecast that arming Baltimore’s school police officers with guns while on school premises will exacerbate fear, distrust, and trauma stemming from negative interactions many Black children have had with law enforcement.

In addition, studies show that arming school police officers with guns does not make schools safer. In fact, the opposite is true as arming school police officers makes schools less safe by increasing physical dangers to youth.⁷ It has been found that there is significantly higher serious school violence in schools where the officers carried firearms.⁸

Schools are meant to be safe places for students where they can learn, grow, make mistakes, and be themselves. Students should be safe and feel safe in their schools. Requiring Baltimore school police officers to carry guns while on school premise turns schools from safe places of learning to police zones that bring the imminent dangers of lethal police violence. Baltimore’s students need holistic supports to address their needs, adverse childhood experiences, and trauma, not police officers who patrol school hallways with guns. Accordingly, the Clinic opposes SB 819.

This written testimony is submitted on behalf of the Youth, Education, and Justice Clinic at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law and not on behalf of the School of Law or the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

⁴ MARYLAND STATE DEP’T. OF EDUC., MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY RACE/ETHNICITY AND GENDER AND NUMBER OF SCHOOLS 1 tbl. 1 (Sept. 30, 2021), https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20212022Student/2022_Enrollment_ByRace_Ethnicity_Gender_Publication_Accessible.pdf

⁵ MARYLAND STATE DEP’T. OF EDUC., MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARREST DATA SCHOOL YEAR 2021-2022, 2 (Mar. 2023), <https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/StudentArrest/MarylandPublicSchoolsArrestDataSY20212022.pdf>

⁶ *Id.* at 16-17.

⁷ Wesley G. Jennings Et al., *Evaluating the Relationship Between Law Enforcement and School Security Measures and Violent Crime in Schools*, J. OF POLICE CRISIS NEGOTIATIONS 109, 118 & 120 (2011).

⁸ *Id.* at 120.

FINAL_SWASC Testimony OPPOSING_SB 819.pdf

Uploaded by: UM SWASC

Position: UNF

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SENTATE BILL 819

Public Schools - School Resource Officers - Firearms Required

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

February 28, 2024

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly opposes SB 819, which will require a Baltimore City school police officer or resource officer (SRO) to carry a firearm while present on the school premises to which they are assigned. Fundamental to social work is identifying the environmental and systemic forces, such as discrimination, oppression and poverty, that create and contribute to problems in living, so that root causes can be addressed rather than symptoms. Given the racial composition of Baltimore City's predominantly Black schools and the perpetuating narrative of violent crime and youth within the city, we are concerned that SB 819 will *endanger* the very students that it aims to protect.

Armed security officers do not ensure school safety. While we recognize the bleak reality of school shootings within the United States and honor the people who have risked their lives to secure our safety, arming school police officers and SROs is not the protective and preventative intervention that thwarts violence in schools. On May 24, 2022, a subject entered Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX with an AR-15 rifle. Even though 11 *armed* law enforcement officers were present on the scene within three minutes of the subject's entry and active shooting, "there was a 77-minute gap between when officers first arrived on the scene and when they finally confronted and killed the subject."¹ This is not an isolated incident: one study conducted by Texas State University found that across 25 active shooter events in 2013, none were resolved because of "armed guards or police officers."² There must be another way to ensure the safety of our children and entire school communities to not only protect them from violence, but to actively work toward more restorative and inclusive environments for learning.

Allowing armed security in school causes further harm to students already disproportionately impacted by gun violence. Baltimore City youth are not insulated from the impact of gun violence, whether it's through direct exposure to shootings in their neighborhoods or the distressing presence of firearms in their schools. This constant exposure can have detrimental effects on their mental well-being, as they become desensitized to violence from a young age. The prevalence of gun violence indirectly contributes to a host of mental and emotional issues among young people. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, gun violence ranks as the 10th leading cause of death for youth across all age groups, highlighting the urgent need for intervention and support.³ Black youth disproportionately experience

¹ U.S. Department of Justice. (n.d.). *Critical Incident Review: Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School*. COPS: Community Oriented Policing Services. <https://cops.usdoj.gov/uvalde>

² STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH, *supra* note 6.

³ National Center for Health Statistics. (2017). National Vital Statistics System: 10 leading causes of injury deaths by age group highlighting unintentional injury deaths, United States – 2010. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/pdf/leading_causes_of_injury_deaths_highlighting_violence_2017-508.pdf

exposure to violence and face significant barriers to accessing mental health treatment. This exposure to violence takes a toll on their mental health, leading to heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and aggression towards their peers.⁴ Addressing these systemic disparities in violence exposure and ensuring equitable access to mental health support is crucial in safeguarding the well-being of Black teens. Prioritizing this access to mental health resources is not only necessary for the safety of Black youth in schools, but it is also crucial to their academic success and persistence.⁵

As a coalition, our perspective and opposition to SB 819 stems from a deep engagement in schools partnering with students, educators, social workers, school psychologists, and behavioral health and mindfulness teams to support healthier school communities. We understand from experience the dire need to provide safe spaces for children to learn and find belonging. Increasing gun presence in schools by arming school police officers and SROs will not do that. Students in Baltimore City schools deserve an alternative response; one that mitigates the surveillance, criminalization, and social exclusion that they experience as a result of the presence of SROs on campus grounds.⁶

One bill in the 2024 legislative session, SB 917 sponsored by committee member Senator Brooks and scheduled to be heard on March 6 in the Committee, offers the establishment of Restorative Practices as one option toward improving school safety and sense of belonging. This effort, in partnership with behavioral health services and the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports, is just one example of an approach that would attempt to create safer schools in Maryland without increasing the prevalence of tools of violence. This is where we start, not with arming police officers and SROs, but with addressing one of the root causes of gun violence and fostering belonging and wellbeing within school environments.

For these reasons, Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges an unfavorable report on SB 819.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

⁴Turner, H. A., Mitchell, K. J., Jones, L. M., Hamby, S., Wade, R., & Beseler, C. L. (2019). Gun violence exposure and posttraumatic symptoms among children and Youth. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 32*(6), 881-889. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.22466>

⁵ Students Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. (2023, August). *Toolkit: Address the Presence of School Resource Officers in Your School*. Students Demand Action. <https://studentsdemandaction.org/report/address-the-presence-of-school-resource-officers-in-your-school/>

⁶ Students Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. (2023, August). *Toolkit: Address the Presence of School Resource Officers in Your School*. Students Demand Action. <https://studentsdemandaction.org/report/address-the-presence-of-school-resource-officers-in-your-school/>