

January 25, 2021

Maryland Senate
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of SB 245: Public Schools – School Resource Officers – Requirements and Prohibitions.

Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs and Judiciary Proceedings Committees.

As a parent and advocate for persons with disabilities, I can't help but support a bill like this one being proposed. The safety of children during the school day should always be a high priority to all.

Too many times in recent years we have seen videos of children being handled in rough and inappropriate ways by school staff and RSOs in their schools. Too many times these children are left with both physical scars as well as emotional scars from these types of encounters. Too often these children have invisible disabilities and emotional challenges that inhibit their ability to self-regulate their behavior. Too often these same children have brown or black skin. Too often the child's needs are not being met by their school's staff members, and they are acting out due to lack of supports specific to their challenges. These children are not damaged or 'bad to the bone'. They are children struggling to meet everyone's expectations in a system that is cookie cutter, and not tailored to their individual needs.

They are not disposable human beings. They are real children, with real issues and possess real untapped potential. Please provide the funding to train all school staff members on better ways of handling our children. Promote trauma informed approaches to education policy making which have been developed to assist the school staff, RSOs and students on ways to work together in less confrontational ways. Lessening the likelihood that students or school staff will be injured during encounters when the student is struggling during the school day. Please help to support them so that they can gain the skills and education so that they can reach their full potential.

School – Prison Pipeline: The pipeline that exists between our schools, and our prison system is very real. Many children with a variety of learning and emotional challenges end up here through no fault of their own. And it is not the outcome that we want to see for any of our children. Let's not create prisoners, a prison atmosphere or use prison like methods when handling our children.

Please support Senate Bill 245 and help RSOs get the training and skills needed to be better tooled to handle the challenges, and needs of ALL of our children while they are on school properties.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of my testimony today.

Mr. Richard Ceruolo
Parent and advocate for persons living with disabilities | Parent Advocacy Consortium