

January 27, 2021

Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chairman
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB 245 – Public Schools-School Resource Officers-Requirements and Prohibitions – Oppose

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 245. On behalf of the Council of Administrative & Supervisory Employees (CASE) in the Baltimore County Public Schools, representing 600 members including 174 school principals, we ask that you **oppose** this bill as written.

As an early adopter of the School Resource Officer program, Baltimore County Public School's partnership with the Baltimore County Police Department has grown over 20 years to provide all middle and high schools with resident SROs and has recently added an elementary school Resource Officer liaison component which has created an officer friendly program geared toward providing a police presence in over 100 elementary schools. This is a component that parents, administrators, teachers, and elected officials have wanted for years.

The success of this, or any program is deeply rooted in the recruitment, selection, and training of officers who share a deep commitment and desire to engage and work with students, and possess the ability to collaborate with school administrators, educators, and parents to positively impact the entire school community.

The presence of school resource officers in our schools is an important component of the duty to protect children on campus. With law enforcement knowledge and skill combined with special SRO training these officers are an integral component of the design, development, and implementation of school safety plans.

SRO training focuses on the special nature of school campuses, student needs and characteristics, and the educational and custodial interests of school personnel. As a result, SROs possess a skill set unique among both law enforcement and educational personnel that enables them to protect the community and the campus while supporting the educational mission. In addition to traditional law enforcement tasks such as searching a student suspected of carrying a weapon or investigating whether drugs had been brought onto campus, SROs daily activities can include a wide range of supportive activities and programs depending on the type of school to which an SRO is assigned. Many of the SROs in Baltimore County also serve as coaches, club sponsors, and mentors beyond school hours. This humanizing of the police officer is especially important in today's world.

The SRO program in the Baltimore County Public Schools is not an optional add-on. It is a vital and functional component of the educational program for all our students. The BCPS SRO program has dedicated positions of leadership provided by the School System and the Police Department, which ensures regular professional development and supervision of our officers.

The CASE Board of Directors unanimously and vigorously voted to oppose this or any bill that would weaken the SRO program in the Baltimore County Public Schools. I thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns and I welcome any further inquiries from the Committee for clarification.

Most sincerely,

T. DeHart

Thomas DeHart
Executive Director

cc: Members, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee