



# Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

## Maryland Sheriffs' Association



### MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair and  
Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Chief David Morris, Co-Chair, MCPA, Joint Legislative Committee  
Sheriff Darren Popkin, Co-Chair, MSA, Joint Legislative Committee  
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: January 27, 2021

RE: **SB 245 Public Schools – School Resource Officers – Requirements and Prohibitions**

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **OPPOSE SB 245**. This bill places unreasonable, arbitrary, draconian, and unwarranted restrictions on a school resource officer (SRO)'s role and appearance during the course of an SRO's duties.

A school resource officer is a law enforcement officer who works closely with administrators in a school setting to create a safer environment for students and staff. In this role, the SRO also provides mentoring and conducts presentations on youth related issues. Because of this broader role in a school system, an SRO participates in a specialized training program designed specifically for working with students in a school setting. This training curriculum includes Maryland school law, trauma-informed counseling, restorative practices, relationship building, and peer mediation techniques. To employ the skills taught through this training an SRO must work in the school system, engage with students, build positive relationships, and direct students to resources. None of which will occur under SB 245.

SB 245 prohibits SROs from entering a school unless specifically summoned by an administrator, to participate in specialized instruction, or to use the bathroom. Further the SRO must wear civilian clothing and conceal firearms. These requirements not only harm the positive relationships students have with SROs across the state, they jeopardize the safety of the officer, students, staff, and school visitors. In 2018 after school shootings at Stoneman Douglas in Florida, and closer to home at Great Mills High School in St Mary's County during which a well-trained School Resource Officer confronted the active shooter, the General Assembly passed Maryland's Safe to Learn Act. The legislation was further enhanced in 2019. SB 245 is contrary to the positive actions this body has taken to promote school safety in reaction to very real threats to school safety. For many students, an SRO is a positive role model in which they trust and confide. These strong relationships build community trust and understanding and improve safety in the school environment.

Maryland law enforcement has many outstanding SROs among its ranks, including one who was recently named National School Resource Officer of the Year. MCPA and MSA urges the Committee not to take steps that would harm the great work of these officers.

For these reasons, MCPA and MSA OPPOSE SB 245 and urge an UNFAVORABLE report.

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