

Arielle Juberg  
Baltimore, Maryland  
District 8

Testimony in Support of Bill HB496, Primary and Secondary Education - Mental Health Services - Expansion (Counselors Not Cops Act)

To: Chair Kaiser and members of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Arielle Juberg

My name is Arielle Juberg. I am a resident of Baltimore County in District 8. I belong to Showing Up for Racial Justice in Baltimore.

I am testifying in support of HB496, Primary and Secondary Education - Mental Health Services - Expansion (Counselors Not Cops Act). Rigorous, high-quality public schools are important to my husband and me as we consider starting a family. The use of state funds for armed police officers and the dearth of social workers, counselors, and psychologists in Maryland's schools has concerned me both as a resident and a future parent.

Depending heavily upon police officers in schools has led to troubling results. In Baltimore County, my county, nearly a third of 2018-2019 student arrests (62 out of 230 arrests) were for disrespect or disruption.<sup>1</sup> These behavioral issues are better addressed through a school counselor or social worker. A third of 2018-2019 arrests occurred among students in special education.<sup>1</sup> I am disturbed that the majority of arrests occurred among African American students (62%), while they comprise 39% of Baltimore County students.<sup>1,2</sup>

I remain very concerned about school violence and shootings. Unfortunately, the evidence indicates that school resource officers do not prevent school shootings.<sup>3</sup> The evidence does show the disproportionate impact of officers on students with special needs and students of color.

Police officers receive extensive training in stopping criminal behavior and apprehending suspects. **There is a serious mismatch when these same officers are arresting children for disruption and restraining children with special needs.** I know Maryland's school resource officers are committed to their jobs and communities. Unfortunately, the presence of these officers more often hurts, rather than helps, children. Using funds for counselors, social workers, and other support staff – just as this bill requires - would better meet children's developmental needs and be a more effective use of government funds. For all these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report for Bill HB496.

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Public Schools Arrest Data. School Year 2018-2019.

<http://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2020/0623/MarylandPublicSchoolsArrestData20182019.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Maryland Public School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender and Number of Students, September 30, 2017.

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20172018Student/2018EnrollbyRace.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The Justice Institute. The Presence of School Resource Officers (SROs) in America's Schools.