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HB 1089 Support

March For Our Lives (MFOL) Maryland is a coalition of young people devoted to fighting for sensible gun violence prevention policies with an emphasis on anti-racism. The Maryland chapter of MFOL has 66 members devoted to protecting Maryland's schools. However, we do not believe that the presence of police in schools is keeping students safe, which is why we strongly support HB 1089, or the Police Free Schools Act.

School police have failed to protect students from school shootings. A study from the Criminology & Public Policy peer-reviewed academic journal [concluded that no empirical evidence supports the claim that school police stop shootings](#), and in many of the highest-profile school shootings nationwide the presence of armed school police has not deterred shooters. In the shootings at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Kentucky's Marshall County High School, Maryland's Great Mills High School in March, and Texas' Santa Fe High School - four high profile school shootings in 2018 - [shooters attacked despite the presence of armed guards, and the guards present failed to stop the shooters from killing](#).

The presence of guns in schools, even in the hands of police or guards, poses a risk to students. Giffords Law Center has found that in the past five years, [there have been over 90 publicly reported incidents of mishandled guns at schools](#). The presence of guns in schools not only pose the risk of misuse but also has a negative emotional impact on students. The National Association of School Psychologists [has argued](#) that rather than making students feel safe, armed guards increase students' fear and can harm their learning process.

Disciplinary measures imposed by SROs disproportionately impact students of color, contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline. A [study](#) by the Council of State Governments Justice Center and The Public Policy Research Institution at Texas A&M University found that “African-American students had a 31 percent higher likelihood of a school discretionary action, compared to otherwise identical white and Hispanic students.” The rate of arrests for disorderly conduct for schools with an SRO was nearly five times the rate of those without an SRO according to a [study](#) for the Journal of Criminal Justice. To avoid the cycle of violence perpetuated by over-policing, an emphasis on wraparound supports, mental health services, and restorative justice is crucial.

For these reasons, March For Our Lives Maryland urges the committee to issue a **Favorable** report for **HB 1089**. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Kira Grossfield at kgrossfield22@gds.org.