

# Jeffrey A. Harrison

Date: March 1, 2021

Position: **Support / Favorable**

Bill Number: **HB 1089**

Bill Title: Primary and Secondary Education – Expansion of Mental Health Services  
and Prohibition of School Resource Officers (Police-Free Schools Act)

Sponsor: Delegate Acevero

Committee: Ways and Means

Dear Committee Chair Kaiser, Committee Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB 1089. In-school arrests are biased. Arrests by police in schools predominantly and disproportionately target students of color and students with disabilities. Several recent studies have shown that stationing law-enforcement officers in schools has criminalized childhood behavior and minor infractions of school rules. This criminalization perpetuates the school-to-prison pipeline that destroys the lives of children across our state. In-school officers do not protect the lives of our children.

The Maryland taxpayer money currently allocated every year for school resource officers (SROs) is counterproductive and only helps to enlarge the school-to-prison pipeline. HB 1089 takes a positive step by re-directing that money into much-needed services such as mental-health services and other student support.

Here is information from the Prince George's County Police-Reform Workgroup Final Report and Recommendations, December 4, 2020, explaining that in-school arrests are biased and explaining that our children's in-school behavior can be alternatively handled:

-From Footnote 1, Page 10: "...data showing who was being arrested highlighted disparities. There were 935 arrests within the last three school years, of which 97% [of] arrests were of students of color. However, African-American and special education children were disproportionately represented overall. For African-American students, although they make up 57% of the student population, they comprise about 86% of students arrested within the last three school years. Similar disproportions exist for special education students. They comprise 11% of the student population, but have represented between 19% and 28% of students arrested within the last three years."

-From Footnote 2, Page 11: "...why PGCPs students were being arrested. Recent data show that the reasons for arrests were for behavior like fighting and disruption, that could have been handled by alternate means not involving the criminal justice system...."

There is no need for law-enforcement officers to be stationed in our schools. Removing SROs and other school-based law-enforcement officers would be a positive development for our schools. More services for our children are desperately needed. We must educate our children, not incarcerate them !

For those reasons, please **support the strong HB 1089**, and report it as **Favorable** from the committee.

Thank you.

Jeffrey A. Harrison

(a member of Greenbelt People Power)

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