

Oppose Bill 1089 -Primary and Secondary Education – Expansion of Mental Health Services and Prohibition of School Resource Officers (Police-Free Schools Act) —

Brigitta Mullican, Maryland District 17
1947 Lewis Ave., Rockville, MD

March 1, 2021

I oppose the elimination of the School Resource Officer Program in Montgomery County Schools and this State Bill 1089. It is unfathomable that this bill is even considered at this volatile time in history for the following reasons:

1. Principals of all MCPS schools oppose this bill.
<https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/schools/mcps-principals-say-police-officers-stationed-in-schools-are-essential/>
2. A recent survey in Prince Georges County revealed that 82% of respondents described the importance of SROs as “very important.” In addition, 92% who had interacted with SROs described their experience as a positive one.
3. The reason given in the bill for eliminating SROs is that there is a disparity between black/ Latino and white student arrests, and that incarceration was more likely of black students compared to white. A “heavy hand” is described in the bill as being used by police officers. Since when is breaking the law supposed to be overlooked? Our country and our county are run by law and order. Without enforcing the law, there is a likelihood of disrespect for the law. Even if there is a disparity between people of various skin colors, the law must be enforced to keep learning in our school buildings safe. If you eliminate SROs, you open up an environment of lawlessness and inconsistency in disciplinary action when incidents occur.
4. The cost of the SRO program, \$3 million is a small price to pay to provide protection for the children and staff at MCPS.

Please keep our students safe and keep the SRO program intact. How quickly we forget the shooting in 2012 that occurred in Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, where 28 students and teachers were killed, among other shooting incidents nation-wide. Here is just one of many incidents where an SRO at MCPS saved the lives of students and staff:

<https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/students-plotted-to-kill-springbrook-high-staff-police/1874097/>.

The color of someone’s skin is irrelevant when any one child, whether black, white, Latino or other, could have been lost. The absence of armed SROs, should this bill pass, makes our schools an easier target...let’s not let that happen. Do not pass this bill, HB 1089.