



## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

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House Ways & Means Committee

**HB 1089: Primary and Secondary Education – Expansion of Mental Health Services and Prohibition of School Resources Officers (Police-Free Schools Act)**

**March 3, 2021**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is an independent, public policy organization that works to improve policies, programs, and services that support people with developmental disabilities and their families in our communities. The DD Council is led by people with developmental disabilities and their families. From that perspective, the DD Council supports HB 1089 which redirects \$10 million a year from the School Resource Officer (SRO) fund (Educ. § 7-1508) to student mental health services, wraparound supports, and restorative approaches, and that prohibits school districts from contracting with police departments to station police at schools.

### **WHY is this legislation important?**

- Students with disabilities and students of color are disproportionately harmed by the presence of police in schools. **In Maryland, students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) receive 23% of school-based arrests despite comprising 12% of the student population.**<sup>i</sup>
- According to data from the U.S. Department of Education’s 2015-16 Civil Rights Data Collection, **students with disabilities nationally are 2.9% more likely to be arrested than students without disabilities when police are present in schools.**<sup>ii</sup> Black boys with disabilities suffer the highest arrest rate, at five times the rate for all students.

### **WHAT does this legislation do?**

- It redirects the \$10 million per year SRO fund to a variety of services and resources that have been proven to effectively support our most vulnerable students. With this funding, school districts would be able to hire needed counselors, social workers, school psychologists, restorative approach practitioners, and community school coordinators. Districts could also use the funding to implement trauma-informed practices and restorative approaches.
- Effective alternatives to school police include supporting students’ positive behavior, prioritizing their social-emotional well-being, and strengthening and investing in relationships among students, staff, and parents. For students with disabilities, proper special education planning and implementation supports positive behavior.

HB 1089 provides Maryland the chance to redirect funds and hire trained professionals who actually have the expertise to effectively support and nurture our students so that they succeed and thrive.

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<sup>i</sup> Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Public Schools Arrest Data: School Year 2018-19 (2020), <http://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2020/0623/MarylandPublicSchoolsArrestData20182019.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> ACLU, COPS AND NO COUNSELORS: HOW THE LACK OF MENTAL HEALTH STAFF IS HARMING STUDENTS 23 (March 2019), [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf)