

March 1, 2021

Dear Maryland General Assembly,

Good afternoon. My name is Sincere King. I am a Senior at Aberdeen High School in Harford County. I am before you today in opposition of any legislation that would remove or affect how School Resource Officer's engage with students in our schools.

This is my story. As I began my 8th grade year at Aberdeen Middle School, I was already in a downward spiral due to a family death. My friends and I became victim to racist comments from a group of Caucasian students. We were called every racist word that exist. Several times, there were heated verbal and physical exchanges. This went on for several months. On both sides, students were suspended through this ordeal.

On February 1, 2017, I changed clothes into what I called my "fight clothing." I was ready to physically fight one of the students from an incident the day prior. As I was walking to my bus, this group was chanting the N word. Thankfully, the change in my appearance was caught by my SRO. My assistant principal and my SRO met with me immediately and we had a great discussion. Thursday, February 23, 2017, my life changed. I was walking down the hallway when I saw a student who had called my mom the B word. This same student threatened to physically fight me in school over social media. As I walked pass this student, I became increasingly angry to the point that I threw a bottle of water in his face which led to a physical altercation. As a result of my actions, we were both suspended, but also referred to juvenile services by our SRO. Every student involved in this racial conflict had met prior with the assistant principal and our SRO. We were advised that any further altercations would result in suspension and a referral to juvenile services. Prior to this, we had been counseled, attempted mediation, and other means to resolve the issue failed.

How did my life change? It was from that point forward; I personally made the commitment to my family and myself that I was not going to get caught up in the hatred that surrounded me. It was at that time I realized the seriousness of my actions and a direction in my life I did not want to go. It was at that time I realized the great relationship I had and to this day still have with my SRO; his commitment to exhausting all resources

available to him before he refers to juvenile services. He is well trained and committed to the community. He allows students to vent. He works with students to make better choice. He is inspiration and to me he is a great friend and mentor.

I was disappointed it took being referred to juvenile services, yet I am grateful because it was at that point, I made the decision to change. We must accept responsibility for our actions and blame no one else.

In closing, I know not every SRO is like my SRO. You should be open to working with SROs and the agencies that train them. You should be enacting legislation that provides more services for juveniles without having to be referred or arrested. You should be enacting legislation that provides more restorative practices.

Respectfully,

Sincere King

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