

# Jeffrey A. Harrison

Date: February 1, 2021

Position: **Support / Favorable**

Sponsor: Delegate Wilkins

Bill Number: **HB 496**

House Committee: Ways and Means

Bill Title: Primary and Secondary Education - Mental Health Services - Expansion  
(Counselors Not Cops Act)

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

I strongly support HB 496.

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. Arrests by police in schools predominantly and disproportionately target students of color and students with disabilities.

The Maryland taxpayer money currently allocated every year for school resource officers is counterproductive and only helps to enlarge the school-to-prison pipeline. HB 496 takes a positive step by re-directing that money into much-needed services such as tutoring, crisis intervention, substance abuse prevention, and academic counseling.

There is no need for school resource officers 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 HB 496** and report it as **Favorable** from the committee.

Thank you.

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