

February 3, 2021

Anita Lampel
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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB496
Primary and Secondary Education - Mental Health Services - Expansion
(Counselors Not Cops Act)

TO: Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and members of the Ways & Means Committee

FROM: Anita Lampel

My name is Anita Lampel. I live in Bethesda, in District 16. I am testifying in favor of HB496, Primary and Secondary Education - Mental Health Services - Expansion (Counselors Not Cops Act).

Changes to the Safe Schools Fund detailed in HB496 are based on the evidence that support services, such as Restorative Justice, school counselors, social workers, and wrap-around services for youth, reduce the criminalization of teen-age mistakes and result in greater equity for Black and brown students and for students who are differently abled.

I have a Ph.D. from Stanford University in Psychology and served as the department head of the child-adolescent mental health program for a large county. In that capacity, and later in private practice, I sat on numerous boards involving juvenile justice, the interface between courts and support services, and how to properly assess and assist youth who were troubled. I went to juvenile halls and juvenile detention facilities, group homes, and psychiatric hospitals for youth. I saw parents and their children in the lobbies of juvenile courts waiting for hours and hours for a court hearing, missing school, missing work, facing fines that they could not pay for trivial issues. The teens I saw in juvenile hall were troubled, sometimes suicidal, frightened, often differently abled, and in need of medical and dental help.

The teens I saw needed support services — and not criminalization — much earlier in their lives. The bill that is before you today will fund critical support services that will interrupt the school to prison pipeline and will help keep students in school.

Results of a major study of SROs in schools show that graduation rates and college attendance decrease when SROs are involved in high schools.¹ The Maryland School to Prison Pipeline Report questioned the usefulness of SROs.² In contrast, results of studies on the impact of properly implemented Restorative Justice and other supportive programs show remarkable positive findings in student retention, satisfaction, and graduation rates.³

The just and equitable choice is to vote in favor of this bill to provide schools the urgently needed funds to implement mental health and other support services for students. **I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB496.**

¹ Weisbart, Emily K. Patrolling Public Schools: The Impact of Funding of School Police on Student Discipline and Long Term Educational Outcomes. Luskin School of Public Affairs, Dept. of Public Policy, University of California at Los Angeles, October, 2018.

² Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline & Restorative Practices. July 1, 2019.
<https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/26excom/defunct/html/32scto.html>

³ Fronius, Trevor, et al. Restorative Justice in US Schools: A Research Review. West Ed, February 2016.