

**HB 496**  
**Primary and Secondary Education – Mental Health Services – Expansion**  
**(Counselors Not Cops Act)**  
**Ways and Means Committee**  
**February 3, 2021**

**TESTIMONY OF JASON MALARA**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

I cannot give oral testimony at this hearing because I will be at my job, but I wanted to share this [recorded version](#) of my testimony, which I delivered at a town hall in December 2020, and I am also writing my testimony below.

My name's Jason I'm here to testify. I'm here to tell my story. I'm here to help other students use their voice because these stories are not easy to tell. I've been through a lot of things in life and in the school and that's because of the way I look: it's because I'm Hispanic. Police in and out of the schools don't help people like me. If you're Black or Brown, the police are against you. I learned that right away when I came here to this country at fifteen years old. Being an immigrant makes seems police are scary and then you have to see them in a school every day; it makes us feel unsafe and unwanted. I want police out of the schools.

When I was a student in a Montgomery County public high school I was harassed and made to feel stupid many times by the police in the school. Here are some of my stories: I experienced in American school. I feared, at fifteen. I spoke very little English and I did not know how to get to my classes. When I asked an officer police in my school for help, they respond by making fun of me, laughing at me, and said "we don't understand you," "we don't speak the same language," "go away!"

The next year, I had many more experiences with the police officer in the school. There was a group of students harassing me and threatening me to jump me. I told the officer in the school about it many times, but the officer would not help me because I am Hispanic, and he thought I was probably in a gang. It was like he thought I deserved it. Then four of those students attacked me one day in the hall. I fought back and defend myself because I had no choice. When I was brought to the office, the police officer was there. No one would listen to me and the officer said: "It's your fault. Look at yourself, you can do nothing. You're a Hispanic piece of shit."

I needed someone who cared about me. I needed someone who understood my anger and could help me. There was only one teacher who listened to me and the problems that I had. Being an immigrant, I have experienced very hard things. I was separated from my mom for many years and I lived with my grandmother. Then, I had to leave my grandmother, who was special to me, and move to another country, where everything was new and hard. I was angry at many things and being harassed every day was too much. I thought school would help me with some of these things, but they only punished me for my feelings. If it weren't for my teacher, I would be probably in prison today. It is so important that students have people in the school that they trust and can open up to – and police are not part of this. Please remove the police from all the schools. Thank you for your time.

