

My name is OFC. Maggie Lee and I am an SRO with Frederick Police Department serving the children and families of Frederick City, MD. Being a School Resource Officer has been the highlight of my career thus far. There is no other role as a police officer in which you can have a greater impact in bettering the lives of children. I was afforded the privilege to call myself an SRO in June 2017 and served as the SRO for Monocacy Elementary School, Monocacy Middle School, and CTC at FCC before taking on the role of SRO at Maryland School for the Deaf. I realized immediately that enforcement was the absolute last reason why we are present in schools.

The primary and most paramount reason is to create lasting relationships and build bridges. Through our daily interactions with our kids we get to know them and learn about their families. We build trust and are able to see from a lens that patrol officers often don't have the luxury to experience. We are specially trained in trauma informed practices and endeavor to make choices that are in the best interest of the child. There have been many times that I have come to the conclusion that to charge a child criminally would have a negative effect. Instead I have worked alongside parents, school officials, and program coordinators to help obtain necessary services and get the ball rolling in the right direction for care.

I am uniquely in tuned to my students due to the relationships and trust built through my presence and our interactions. I know when a student is having an off day and can be there for support. I have been able to recognize when kids are working through issues and unable to verbalize them. On one occasion I observed one of my kids sitting alone at the lunch table with no food. I spoke with her about why she wasn't eating. This was due to her not having any money on her food account. We got her lunch and then I was able to determine that she also had no food at home. Through work with the school, we were able to get her and her family services and counseling.

I had another student come to me who admittedly, "hated police." He had been assaulted and robbed by some former friends of a prized possession he worked very hard to earn the money to buy. I was eventually able to earn this student's trust and through investigation located his stolen property and returned it. This student has gone on to high school but to this day, this student will seek me out if he has a problem. Most recently, he had bicycles stolen from his back yard. Instead of calling 911 he called me because he has a relationship with me, his old SRO. I was off duty but explained that I was going to send some patrol officers. I assured him that they were, "cool," and would help him. They responded and got his stolen bicycles back. This kid who historically had a bad relationship and interactions with officers is a bit more trusting because of his relationship with an SRO.

I had another student at my assigned middle school who broke her flip flops in the spring of 2018. We tried everything to fix them to no avail. Unfortunately, her Mom was at work and couldn't be contacted for another pair of shoes. Being out of options, I went to Walmart and bought her new sandals. The student told me that no one had ever done anything like that for her before. This same student came running up to me at an overtime assignment I was working in the community and felt comfortable enough to throw her arms up and hug me. She then drug me by

the arm to meet her Mom who thanked me for the sandals. That student will never forget her SRO and I will never forget her.

Another student I had was well known to law enforcement and had many underlying issues. She would routinely be unable to self-regulate and wouldn't listen to school officials. Over time, this student learned that I was fair and had a genuine interest in her wellbeing. On many occasions when she just couldn't deal with class anymore or wouldn't listen nor calm down we would walk the halls. We would make endless circles together around the school while we talked about everything that was going on in her world. School staff could go back to what they were doing while we simply, walked. She would always calm down and eventually be able to go back to class. This was the same student who I still check on. I also still talk to her Grandmother and check in on the family. I have driven to her home to pick up forgotten glasses on more than one occasion so that she could see well enough to learn for the day. This is the same student who, when in crisis outside of school, flagged down a Frederick Police Department cruiser asking for OFC. Maggie. The officer in that cruiser wasn't me but my relationship with her made it okay for her to flag down someone who looked like me and find help.

Every single SRO is prepared to defend their students and staff and lay down their lives. I received a report of a possible man in the bushes beside my school wearing camouflage with a firearm. This was witnessed by a school administrator and I had every reason to believe that what he saw was factual and accurate. I immediately locked down the school, got necessary back up started to my location, and approached the threat. This event began and ended within a minute. Luckily it was a false alarm but think of the outcome if it were real. I was already there. I was already making my way to stop the threat. Within moments I had all of Frederick City on their way to save our children and protect them from harm. If my presence is removed how much more time will that give those who wish to do our children harm? If I am removed, those who wish to do harm will know and they will act.

Through my presence in the schools and observations I have been able to determine when kids are hungry, afraid of going home, being abused, living in deplorable conditions with no heat, suicidal, suffering from sexual abuse, suffering from drug addiction, living with a parent that's addicted, and the list goes on. I am one of the few officers that can walk into the high school and be greeted with smiles and hugs. At least some of them think I'm "kinda cool."

Additionally, I am trained in the following:

- Certified SRO – Maryland Safe Schools
- National Advanced SRO – National Association of School Resource Officers
- Interdiction for the Protection of Children
- Child First Forensic Interviewer (Trauma Informed Interviewing)
- Safe Schools Preparedness Course
- Protecting Children of Arrested Parents
- Bomb Threat Preparedness & Response
- School Standard Response Protocol
- Social Media & Mobile Devices

- Bullying & Cyber Bullying
- Planning for the Needs of Children in Disasters
- Identifying Signs of Abuse Amid Social Distancing

Some of the programs I have been a part of include:

- Explorer Post #153 (Lead Advisor)
- Shop with a Cop
- Fish with a Cop
- Youth Police Academy
- Adopted Child Familiarization Event
- Holiday Adopt a Family
- Centro Hispano de Frederick – Summer Learning Series
- Centro Hispano de Frederick – Volunteer Judge, End of Summer Program
- I Can Ride Bicycle Program
- MOMS Dunk Tank Participant 2018

I truly cannot imagine a world without SROs. We are highly trained, adaptable, approachable officers with the best interest of the children of the State of Maryland in mind. Their wellbeing is first and foremost our driving force. We do not endeavor to be enforcers and mindlessly charge children for mistakes they may make, they are children. We do not exist to be a threatening or scary presence and many students have learned, through their interactions with us that police officers are there to help. The only flaw of an SRO is that we are unable to save and help every single child. I can, however, unequivocally promise you that we won't stop trying. If this legislation is passed this would cause irrevocable harm to our children and remove any chance, we have of making positive connections with kids through interactions and our consistent presence inside the school building. If they see us and get to know the good people we are, while in uniform then we have done our job and created lasting bonds of trust that will be carried into our communities. Please do not allow this bill to pass.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony for review.