



**HB1089: Primary and Secondary Education – Expansion of Mental Health Services and 3 Prohibition of School Resource Officers (Police-Free Schools Act)**

**Support**

The Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) would like to offer its support of House Bill 1089. The Citizens Review Board for Children consists of Governor appointed volunteers representing 23 counties and Baltimore City. CRBC reviews cases of children in out-of-home placement, monitors child welfare programs and makes recommendations for system improvements to the Department of Human Services and the Maryland Legislature.

This bill prohibits school resource officers from entering a school building except if summoned by a school administrator or official to respond to an emergency involving violence or the threat of violence, to participate in certain training, or to use certain facilities; requires school resource officers to conceal any firearms except under certain circumstances; requires school resource officers to wear civilian clothing; and prohibits school resource officers from participating in the routine school discipline of a student.

It is in alignment with CRBC's mission to support legislation that ensures the well-being of children, particularly those in out-of-home placements. CRBC supports this legislation for the following reasons:

- There has been very minimal data that supports the inclusion of school resources officers in schools, however, there is significant data that show that school resource officers do not decrease incidences of school violence, and have demonstrated an inadequacy in intervening when incidents do occur.
- School resource officers are trained to enforce the law, just as any other law enforcement officer. While some take on the added responsibility of being a mentor-like figure, that is not their fundamental role. Too often incidents in schools that require a trained mental health professional are addressed by school resource officers who are not trained to handle such occurrences.
- Students, particularly those in out-of-home placements, have already experienced significant trauma. Many of whom have also experienced trauma at the hands of law enforcement in their communities and homes. The added presence of law enforcement in schools re-traumatizes students and has an adverse effect on the learning process.
- The expressed need for increased law-enforcement presence in schools, particularly in underserved and minority communities supports a racist notion that people of

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- color are inherently more dangerous despite the fact that most significantly violent school-based incidents occur in predominantly white school buildings.
- HB 1089 not only eliminates the SRO presence in schools, it also reallocates much needed funding as well as evidence-based practices that support student well-being and social-emotional learning including, licensed clinicians in school buildings, restorative and trauma-informed practices training, wraparound services for students and their families, and others.

For the reasons stated above, the Citizens Review Board for Children urges a favorable report on HB1089.