

March 8, 2022

Louise M. Weissman
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TESTIMONY ON #HB - 613 POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
Public Schools – Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures – Increase

TO: Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Louise M. Weissman

My name is Louise Weissman. I am a resident of District 22. I am submitting this testimony against HB#613: Public Schools – Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures – Increase. I have personal experience which I am sharing with you today that explains why I do not support the passage of this bill.

My son was placed in our home out of Foster Care when he was 8 in 1997, along with his biological sister. He experienced significant neglect as well as mental and physical abuse while living with his biological mother. It wasn't too long before we knew he needed extensive educational and therapeutic services.

He had problems with anxiety, hyperactivity, and periodically refused to take direction. One day, while in middle school, he bolted. While a counselor stood by and talked with him, he stayed close by. But the school administration had called law enforcement, and as soon as they arrived and he saw them, his "fight or flight" instincts went into overdrive and he ran. It was not the police who managed the situation, the therapist did. Luckily, he was eventually found close to school.

Adding more funds to the SRO fund through HB#613 will not keep students safe. Instead, it would fund additional law enforcement in schools and further the school-to-prison pipeline. The presence of School Resource Officers is harming students at taxpayer expense. We cannot address issues connected with the incarceration of minors with passage of this bill. It will, instead, contribute to the already problematic over-policing of Black and Brown students as well as students with disabilities. It will worsen an already existing problem. It is concerning that we continue to drastically underfund mental health supports which can contribute to students' healing and development that, in turn, will create safe environments.

In public schools the presence of School Resource Officers (SROs) harm students at taxpayer expense. **I respectfully urge this committee to return an unfavorable report on HB#613.**