



APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HOUSE BILL 0613: Public Schools- Appropriations for
School Safety Expenditures- Increase

March, 3, 2022
POSITION: OPPOSE

The Choice Program at UMBC strongly opposes *HB 0613: Public Schools-Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures-Increase*. We urge the Appropriations Committee to issue an unfavorable report on this bill.

Maryland's legal and public education system unfairly subjects youth to the attention of law enforcement and the Department of Juvenile Services. Disproportionately Black, Latinx, and disabled young people are hyper-policed and surveilled in Maryland's schools, courts and public spaces. HB 0613, which proposes a 100% increase in spending for the Safe Schools Fund, would exponentialize this injustice. **This bill would increase law enforcement's undue attention on young people by appropriating immensely more money for police presence in schools and it would needlessly perpetuate the school to prison pipeline.**

For nearly 35 years, The Choice Program at UMBC has served Maryland youth who are systems-involved. Presently, Choice works with young people and their families in Baltimore City as well as Baltimore, Howard, Prince George's, and Montgomery Counties. Choice serves as an alternative to the school-to-prison pipeline; our primary goal is to reduce the number of Black and Latinx young people who are entangled in the youth legal system. Young people often remind us that their past trauma—and worst mistakes—should not define them. In FY 21, we provided engaging programming, resource brokering, school support and holistic case management to **656** young people who were under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Services. We served **850** young people in total, directly engaging them in their schools and by providing vocational support. Our model seeks to dismantle racist structures and, instead, employs strengths-based approaches focused on positive relationships and young people's agency. We hold high expectations for youth and parents, as well as high levels of support. These guiding principles are essential in addressing racial inequities young people face at an individual and systemic level and are also what lead us to oppose HB 0613.

Every school district in Maryland utilizes school resource officers/school police despite the fact that nationally, **there is no evidence that school police protect from or deter school**

shootings¹ or other violence,² nor do they decrease the number of students violating school rules. In fact, some evidence shows a positive correlation between presence of school police and frequency of school shootings, as well as deadliness of shootings.³ Additionally, school police presence does not decrease any category of school-based offenses⁴ and students report that police presence only exacerbates a negative school climate by creating a sense of heightened fear and anxiety within the school.⁵ So while law enforcement presence, whether school resource officers (SROs) or school police, fails at protecting the physical safety of students in schools, they do manage to continue already existing disparities and create environments in which it is impossible for young people to learn.

Police presence in schools criminalizes young people, especially Black, Latinx, and disabled youth. As a whole, nationally, schools with police presence arrest young people 3.5 times the rate of schools without police.⁶ These arrests ensnare young people in legal systems that are punitive, dehumanizing, and incredibly hard to get out of. Mapping on to trends of racial disparities in the United States, this criminalization of young people especially impacts black and brown young people. Nationally, Black children are about 2.4 times more likely to receive a school-related arrest than white children. In Maryland, the number jumps to three times more likely.⁷ Put another way, even though data demonstrates that Black students misbehave in school at the same rate as their peers, in Maryland, Black students receive 56% of school-based arrests statewide despite representing only about a third of the student population.⁸ This trend is the same for Latinx youth and youth who are disabled. Nationally, Latinx students are arrested at a rate 1.3 times that of white students and students with disabilities are nearly 3 times more likely to be arrested than students without disabilities.⁹ More specifically, in Maryland, students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) receive 23% of school-based arrests despite comprising only 12% of the student population.¹⁰ This data makes clear that the presence of SROs and school police presence fuels the school to prison pipeline, not disrupts it.

Driven by data and motivated by our value that young people are experts in their own lives, The Choice Program at UMBC believes in dismantling school policing infrastructure, including the

¹ The Trace. "Do Armed Guards Prevent School Shootings?," April 6, 2019.

<https://www.thetrace.org/2019/04/guns-armed-guards-school-shootings/>.

² National Public Radio, "Why There's a Push to Get Police Out of Schools," June 23, 2020.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/23/881608999/why-theres-a-push-to-get-police-out-of-schools>

³ Dupont, D. (n.d.). *Sociologist presents research behind headlines about school safety – BG Independent News*. Retrieved February 14, 2021, from

<https://bgindependentmedia.org/sociologist-presents-research-behind-headlines-about-school-safety/>

⁴ Op. Cit. Chongmin Na and Denise Gottfredson

⁵ Dignity in Schools Campaign, *A Resource Guide on Counselors Not Cops* (2016),

https://dignityinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Resource_Guide-on-CNC.pdf

⁶ Witaker A., Et al. (n.d.). *Cops and No Counselors How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff Is Harming Students*. Pg 23. https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf

⁷ ACLU Maryland. "The Future of Schooling: No Cops, More Counselors," September 29, 2020.

https://www.aclu-md.org/en/news/future-schooling-no-cops-more-counselors?ms_aff=MD&initms_aff=MD&ms=200930_SRBblog_&initms=200930_SRBblog_&ms_chan=eml&initms_chan=eml

⁸ Maryland State Department of Education, *Maryland Public Schools Arrest Data: School Year 2018-19* (2020).

<http://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2020/0623/MarylandPublicSchoolsArrestData20182019.pdf>

⁹ Witaker A., Et al. (n.d.). Pg 24.

¹⁰ Maryland State Department of Education, *Maryland Public Schools Arrest Data: School Year 2018-19* (2020).

culture and practice of surveillance in schools. We support efforts for school safety that consider students first, including restorative approaches, social emotional learning, trauma informed care, and integration of mental health staff and counselors in schools. In fact, we know that Baltimore city schools that used restorative practices saw a 44% reduction in suspensions and a greater increase in overall school climate.¹¹ **Policing and increased law enforcement presence in our schools should not be Maryland's focus, now or ever.** Maryland must join nationwide efforts to make counselors, psychologists, nurses, restorative practitioners, and social workers available to students in schools, not cops.

The Choice Program respectfully urges the Appropriations Committee to issue an unfavorable *HB 0613: Public Schools- Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures*.

¹¹ ACLU Maryland. "The Future of Schooling: No Cops, More Counselors," September 29, 2020.