

March 8, 2022

Carol Stern
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TESTIMONY AGAINST HB0613
Public Schools - Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures - Increase

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

FROM: Carol Stern

My name is Carol Stern from Chevy Chase, District 16. I am providing this testimony against HB0613, Public Schools - Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures - Increase.

In my Jewish tradition, *teshuvah*, repentance, is a core principle. Jews believe that people can always repent from their mistakes and bad choices, and that society should be structured to encourage that process. Removing school resource officers (SROs) from schools is an important way for our government to facilitate *teshuvah*, healing, and recovery rather than perpetuating the school to prison pipeline, which disproportionately affects Black and brown students.

Employing SROs is an unfair systemic structure that does not offer students the help they might need. Every police officer in a school should be replaced with a mental health professional, counselor or community resource coordinator. In addition, there are proven and promising strategies that can be implemented with removal of SROs such as restorative and trauma informed approaches, wraparound services, and/or special education planning and implementation.

As a mother and grandmother, I am horrified that in Maryland because of SROs in most middle and high schools, 70% of school arrests are for fistfights without weapons and offenses like disruption/disrespect, alcohol/tobacco, and trespassing. The remainder are mostly for simple drug possession.¹ These are instances when police were NOT needed to handle the offense. Any situation in a school that actually required police intervention could be handled easily with a 911 call.

I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on HB0613, which will add funding to increase the number of SROs and only continue the school to prison pipeline caused by the presence of police in our Maryland schools.

¹ MSDE, Maryland Public Schools Arrest Data, School Year 2018-19.