



BILL NO: House Bill 23
TITLE: School Discipline - Data Collection and School Resource Officers
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
HEARING DATE: January 20, 2022
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the Ways and Means Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 23.**

Adolescent girls who have experienced dating violence, sexual abuse, or witnessed domestic violence are significantly more likely to enter the juvenile justice system through what many call the school to prison pipeline.¹ For girls, abuse is the gateway to the pipeline, which has led to some referring to the school to prison pipeline as the more aptly named abuse to prison pipeline. Girls' experiences of trauma inhibits their ability to function at school and often leads to classroom behavior that is considered disruptive and deemed punishable.² Rather than acknowledge this behavior as a symptom of abuse, girls are punished with suspension, expulsion, or referral to law enforcement. The increased presence of law enforcement in schools facilitates the school to prison pipeline and has led to girls being arrested for school-based incidents at a much higher rate.³ Once involved in the juvenile justice system, the system itself exacerbates the trauma girls have already experienced and some girls even experience new incidents of abuse.⁴

House Bill 23 seeks to prohibit school resource officers (SROs) from unilaterally enforcing discipline-related school policies, rules, regulations, or procedures. This is a crucial step towards dismantling the school to prison pipeline in Maryland. When SROs are present and enforcing policies in schools, a student's chances of being involved in the juvenile justice system are drastically increased. In the 2017-2018 school year, Maryland had the 5th highest number of school-related arrests, despite being 20th in number of students enrolled.⁵ Instead of criminalizing students by pushing them out of schools and into the juvenile justice system, House Bill 23 aims to keep the enforcement of school policy in school

¹Human Rights Project for Girls, *The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story*, 2015.

² Justin, Emily (2021). *Stopping the Flow: Eliminating the School-to-Prison Pipeline in Washington State*. Seattle Journal for Social Justice, 19(2), 613-652.

³ Simkins, Sandra B., Amy E. Hirsh, Erin McNamara Horvat and Marjorie B. Moss (2004). *The School to Prison Pipeline for Girls: The Role of Physical and Sexual Abuse*. Children's Legal Rights Journal, 24(4), 56-72; The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence *School Resource Officers, Racial Equity, and Decriminalizing Survivors*.

⁴ *Fact Sheet on Domestic Violence & the Criminalization of Girls*. Free Bresha Campaign.

⁵ <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/estimations/2017-2018>

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administrators' hands, which is a better and more effective option for addressing behavioral responses to trauma.

Further, House Bill 23 strengthens transparency about Maryland schools' disciplinary practices through the collection and publication of disaggregated data. Disparities in school disciplinary practices cannot be addressed without first having accessible data. Requiring that discipline-related data be methodically kept and publicly accessible promotes accountability for schools. Additionally, having access to this data will help ensure that those working to end the school to prison pipeline are doing so in the most informed and effective way possible.

By limiting law enforcement intervention in schools and improving schools' transparency and accountability, House Bill 23 will help to create more a supportive and student-centered school climate where all students are empowered to reach their fullest potential.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 23.**