



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair and
Members of the House Appropriations Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Natasha Mehu, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: March 27, 2024

RE: **SB 1077 Public Schools – Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures – Increase
(School Safety Enhancement Act of 2024)**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT SB 1077**. This bill increases funding for school resource officers to provide adequate law enforcement coverage if a school is not assigned a school resource officer.

A school resource officer is a law enforcement officer who works closely with administrators in a school setting to create a safer environment for students and staff. In this role, the SRO also provides mentoring and conducts presentations on youth-related issues. Because of this broader role in a school system, an SRO participates in a specialized training program designed specifically for working with students in a school setting. This training curriculum includes Maryland school law, trauma-informed counseling, restorative practices, relationship building, and peer mediation techniques. To employ the skills taught through this training an SRO must work in the school system, engage with students, build positive relationships, and direct students to resources. For many students, an SRO is a positive role model in which they can trust and confide in. These strong relationships build community trust and understanding and improve safety in the school environment.

MCPA and MSA support an increase in funding for this purpose and encourage greater flexibility in how funds may be used. Under current guidelines, if an existing law enforcement officer receives training and transfers to an SRO unit, funds cannot be used to replace the law enforcement officer who transferred. As Chiefs and Sheriffs manage their agency budgets, this flexibility to use funds for this purpose as long as the number of SRO positions in the unit increases would meet the specified intent of the law while ensuring other agencies' needs are met. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT SB 1077**.