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MAYOR

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**SB 0644**

February 12, 2025

**TO:** Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

**RE:** Senate Bill 644 – Public Schools - School Resource Officers - Firearms Required

**POSITION:** **Oppose**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **opposes** Senate Bill (SB) 644- Public Schools - School Resource Officers - Firearms Required.

SB 644 would require all Baltimore City school police officers or school resource officers (SRO's) to carry a firearm while on the premises of the school they are assigned. This bill only applies to Baltimore City Schools, which appears to blatantly target Black school-aged children, who comprise 58% of the Baltimore City Public Schools system.

SB 644 would contribute to over-policing and exacerbate instances of escalation of force against students exhibiting delinquent violent and non-violent behavior that could be solved without the use of force. Additionally, the mandate of firearms in school would demonstrably do little to reduce the incidence of school gun violence, for which firearm advocates argue officers with firearms in schools prevent. According to a 2023 study of 2014-2018 U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights data published by the University at Albany and the RAND Corporation, the presence of police officers in schools did reduce some violence on campuses but not gun related violence.<sup>i</sup> According to their findings, the presence of SRO's is actually linked to an uptick of gun related offenses. In addition, researchers found that the presence of SROs also increase the use of suspension, expulsion, arrests, and referrals to police, particularly for Black students, boys, and students with disabilities.

From this, it can be concluded that the increased escalation, force, and adverse disciplinary outcomes for students as a result of SRO presence will likely be exacerbated should all SRO's carry firearms on school campuses in Baltimore City, with little benefit with regards to reducing gun violence. For this reason, the BCA respectfully request an **unfavorable** report on SB 644.

<sup>i</sup> Sorensen, L. C., Avila-Acosta, M., Engberg, J. B., & Bushway, S. D. (2023). The thin blue line in schools: New evidence on school-based policing across the U.S. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 42(4), 941–970. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22498>