



Testimony Oppose SB644

Public Schools – School Resource Officers – Firearms Required

Education, Energy, and the Environment

February 12, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

MAREE is in opposition of **Senate Bill 644 – Public Schools – School Resource Officers – Firearms Required**. The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland’s education system.

Senate Bill 644 advocates for requiring a Baltimore City school police officer and a school resource officer to carry a firearm while present on the premises of the school to which the officer is assigned before or after regular school hours on school days and on days other than school days.

Even with the best training, there is always the risk of accidental discharge or improper use of firearms in a school environment, which could lead to tragic consequences. This risk is heightened by the presence of students, who may not fully understand the seriousness of firearms and could inadvertently cause dangerous situations. As a result, it is crucial to carefully weigh the implications of allowing firearms in schools, ensuring that the safety of students and staff remains the top priority. The presence of armed guards can foster an atmosphere of fear rather than safety. This action may convey a message that the school is a high-risk environment, leading to heightened anxiety and stress among students. Additionally, the militarization of the school setting could undermine the nurturing and supportive atmosphere that is essential for positive mental well-being and effective learning.

MAREE is concerned that presence of armed school resource officers will disproportionately target Black and Brown students, leading to a higher risk of racial profiling and reinforcing systemic inequalities. This targeting can create an environment of fear and mistrust among students, particularly those from Black and Brown communities, which can negatively impact their educational experience. Security in schools can be achieved through multiple methods. Effective strategies include the presence of school counselors and mental health professionals who play a significant role in addressing the root causes of violence, such as bullying, trauma, and emotional distress, fostering a supportive environment that promotes overall well-being and safety.

mareealliance.org



Baltimore City is the only jurisdiction in Maryland that prohibits school police officers from carrying firearms inside schools. There is no need for this to change. Our schools are safe, nurturing, and secure without the presence of firearms.

MAREE respectfully asks the committee to oppose SB644.

peace and truth,

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE)