



**SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY and the ENVIRONMENT**

**SENATE BILL 644: Public Schools – School Resources Officers – Firearms Required**

**DATE: February 10, 2025**

**POSITION: OPPOSE**

Youth As Resources (YAR) is a youth-led organization focused on grant-making, leadership development, community organizing, and institutional change. We empower ourselves and our peers to address the root causes of our pressing issues through training, organizing, collaboration, and funding.

Our 22-member Board of Directors, all Baltimore City youth aged 14-24, governs the organization and manages two grant cycles per year, fund development, program priorities, and outcome evaluation. Each year, we adopt an issue agenda based on our lived experiences and those of our peers. For FY 2025 (July 2024 – June 2025), our focus areas include school police accountability, school climate, youth homelessness, and mental health/disability awareness.

As part of our commitment to school police accountability, we have:

- Launched the School Police Accountability Roundtable (SPAR), a youth-led coalition of young people, adult activists, and advocacy organizations focused on education, justice, and mental health. Our goal is to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline by reducing police presence in schools and ensuring that school officers foster positive relationships with students and families. SPAR is essential because it allows us to create our own strategies and make decisions, with adults providing resources and information—but not speaking for us.
- Engaged over 1,500 peers in developing a school police report card, a survey measuring student experiences and relationships with school police.
- Advocated for an annual school police report card survey and five hours of mandatory youth-led training for school officers and part of the school police policies and general orders.
- Educated peers about their rights when interacting with school police.
- Worked with allies on policies regarding the use of force, police involvement in school discipline, and diversion strategies.

- Helped develop a student-friendly police complaint form, which has been adopted by the school system and the Civilian Review Board.
- Successfully fought efforts to arm school police and testified against legislation that would have doubled the statewide budget for school resource officers.

**We oppose SB 644 because requiring Baltimore City school police officers to carry firearms on school grounds will increase harm, not safety.**

Increasing the presence of armed police in schools will only add to the trauma that many of us already experience. There is no evidence that arming school police improves school safety. Instead, we believe it will make students feel even more over-policed and unsafe.

We already see school police use pepper spray against students. Giving them guns creates the real possibility that they will escalate situations that could be resolved with other de-escalation methods.

Research shows that students arrested in school are three times more likely to drop out, less likely to be employed, and significantly more likely to be involved in the adult justice system. We need more opportunities to address mental health, healing, relationship-building, and trauma. Simply adding more policing will not address the root causes of violence in our schools.

Arming school police would also be costly. Baltimore City Public Schools already spends far more on school police than on mental health resources—but mental health and wellness resources are what we actually need.

We urge you to oppose SB 644 and instead invest in real solutions that make students feel safe: mental health support, restorative justice practices, and community-building.

Thank you.