



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of
House Bill 76: Local School Systems – School Safety – Grant Allocations**

Appropriations Committee

Position: Oppose

February 17, 2025

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future so every student in our state is equipped to thrive upon graduation. **Strong Schools Maryland urges an unfavorable vote on House Bill 157**, which if enacted, would allow LEAs who have already spent their grant allotment on law enforcement in public schools to receive additional funds, rather than supporting all LEAs to receive funds to make their schools and students safer.

The approach proposed in HB157 risks exacerbating funding inequities across Maryland and does not prioritize evidence-based school safety strategies as the bill permits (and implicitly encourages) school systems to exhaust and reapply for grant funds to be spent on police and school resource officers. Research shows that police presence in our schools does not protect our students from crimes such as school shootings, but rather further marginalizes students and limits the students' feelings of belongingness.¹ The presence of school resource officers and the harm caused disproportionately impacts Black students and students with disabilities.²

How do we approach school safety in a productive manner? Data shows that the use of restorative practices – not increased law enforcement – improves outcomes for students and overall school safety; we see this right here in Maryland. Baltimore City released a report summarizing the impact of employing restorative practices in schools; school suspensions dropped by 44%, 72% of staff reported improved school climate, and much more.³

Legislation passed that impacts students and children should promote trust between the school and students. Additional funding for policing students contradicts the Blueprint's commitment to the restorative and best practices. We urge this committee to reject HB 76 and focus on advancing legislation that aligns with the promises Maryland has made to all students by expanding student mental health services, wraparound supports, and restorative practices, which are more effective at keeping schools safe. In short, **HB 157 exacerbates funding inequalities among Maryland's districts while failing to support LEAs in applying for funds that will *actually* make our schools, students, school staff, and communities safer.**

For these reasons, we strongly urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 157.

For more information, contact Kenzie Funk: kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org

¹ [O'Neill and McGloin, 2007](#)

² [MSDE 2021](#)

³ [Restorative Practises in Baltimore City School, 2020](#)