



**Testimony in opposition of  
Senate Bill 454: Public Schools – School Resources Officers – Firearms Required  
Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Position: Oppose**

February 11, 2026

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. We are also a member of the Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD), which brings together advocates, service providers, and community members to transform school discipline practices within Maryland's public school systems. **Strong Schools Maryland urges an unfavorable vote on Senate Bill 454**, which would require Baltimore City Public Schools to mandate that school resources officers carry firearms while on school premises.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a World-Class system of public schools for our state's students. Central to that vision are safe and supportive learning environments that allow teachers to teach and students to learn. The Blueprint recognizes the importance of restorative practices as a means to create these safe environments that build a sense of belonging, safety, and social responsibility for everyone in the school community. Senate Bill 454 counteracts this vision by prioritizing armed law enforcement over proven, student centered approaches to school safety, introducing unnecessary risk and harm in school environments.

Police presence in schools does not prevent schools from egregious acts of violence such as school shootings, as proven by accumulating research. Furthermore, data shows that SROs often intensify the use of suspension, expulsion, police referral, and arrest of students, negatively impacting the school community and students' ability to learn. These impacts then disproportionately harm Black students and students with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, evidence demonstrates that restorative practices improve student outcomes and contribute to safer school environments. For example, after Baltimore City Schools implemented restorative practices in their pilot schools, suspensions fell by 44% in one school year.<sup>2</sup>

The potential harm caused by this proposed legislation is particularly concerning for Baltimore City Public Schools, the only local school system with its own dedicated police force. As a result, BCPS students experience greater police contact than any other student body across the state. Requiring school police officers to carry firearms would further intensify this dynamic and increase the risk of exacerbating trauma. Consequently, this bill would permit policymakers to use the district's limited resources to arm officers

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<sup>1</sup> [New Evidence in School Based Policing Across the US, 2023](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Deborah T. Eisenberg et al., 2018](#)

rather than prioritize needed educational and socio-emotional supports when there is a lack of meaningful data supporting the claim that arming school police increases school safety or lowers violent crime.<sup>3</sup>

It is the responsibility of the Maryland General Assembly to advance legislation that fosters trustworthy relationships between schools and students. Arming Baltimore City Public Schools School Resource Officers does not show a commitment to the Blueprint, will not improve school safety or student well-being, and is likely to worsen school climate and student safety. We urge this committee to reject Senate Bill 454, and instead utilize this Session to advance legislation that promotes restorative practices strategies that are reflective of the highest-achieving schools in the world.

**For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 454.**

*For more information, contact Kenzie Funk: [Kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org](mailto:Kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org)*

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<sup>3</sup> [School Resource Officers: Law Enforcement Officers in School, 2018](#)