
MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS

SENATE BILL 454: Public Schools – School Resource Officers – Firearms Required

DATE: February 11, 2026

POSITION: OPPOSE

The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD) brings together advocates, service providers, and community members dedicated to transforming school discipline practices within Maryland’s public school systems. CRSD is committed to the fair and equitable treatment of all students, including pregnant or parenting students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and socio-economic status, and reducing barriers to learning for all students. **CRSD opposes SB 454**, which would effectively *require a Baltimore City Public School System police officer to carry a firearm* during regular school hours, which is contrary to current law, policy and practice.¹

Baltimore City Public School System (City Schools) has long held a policing strategy that it deems is appropriate for creating a school environment that promotes school safety. Indeed, recent research on where shootings take place in Baltimore City found that shootings take place outside school buildings and that students feel safest in schools.² However, SB484 would, if enacted, impose an unwanted new policy on Baltimore City, a jurisdiction the bill’s sponsors do not represent. Senate Bill 484 seems to be rooted in outdated perceptions about Baltimore City and its school system; the bill is an example of legislation based on assumption rather than on evidence that the bill is actually needed—particularly by those who would be most deeply affected by the bill’s passage.

As the only local school system with its own dedicated police force, Baltimore City students experience greater police contact than any other student body across the state. The imposition of this bill would only magnify that fact.

CRSD’s concern is threefold: (1) increasing the presence of lethally armed police officers in Baltimore City schools would needlessly exacerbate the trauma experienced by many of its children; (2) the proposed legislation is a shift away from the proven restorative approaches City Schools has adopted; (3) policymakers will use the district’s limited resources to arm officers rather than prioritize needed educational and socio-emotional supports; and (4) arming school police is an unproven strategy for improving school safety.

¹ This bill is similar to versions which were introduced and rejected in past years, including in 2024 (SB 819) and in 2025 (SB 644).

² Bowie, L. & Vuttaluru, S. (February 2, 2023). How violent neighborhoods threaten otherwise safe Baltimore Schools. *Baltimore Banner*. <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/education/k-12-schools/shootings-near-baltimore-city-schools-PPIKB4DTKNCKBENQ2CLFW4QUEY/>

As a Congressional Research Services report points out, the public response to issues of school safety and security too often focuses on violence prevention and incident response. The report notes: “. . . school safety and security also include issues related to bullying, harassment, childhood trauma, student mental health, substance abuse, school climate, and student discipline” all of which require different kinds of responses.³ For example, efforts to address school violence have included grant programs to increase mental health awareness among school-aged youth and school personnel and connect youth with mental health issues and their families to needed services. Other programs help local education agencies develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs and activities that foster safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments that support student academic achievement. Maryland needs more of these types of programs, not more guns in the schools.

There is a lack of meaningful data supporting the claim that arming school police increases school safety or lowers violent crime.⁴ On the other hand, there is substantial data that shows that even one instance of police contact increases the likelihood that a young person will have further involvement with the justice system, fall behind, and/or ultimately drop-out of school.⁵ Research also finds that a public health approach is the most effective way to address school safety.⁶ The Maryland Center for School Safety also points to the importance of a comprehensive approach to violence prevention by integrating a public-health approach across all Maryland schools.⁷

The presence of SROs in schools can also contribute to a greater number of disciplinary actions being taken against students—particularly students of color and students with disabilities.⁸ This is

³ Congressional Research Service (September 24, 2024). *Federal support for school safety and security*, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R46872>.

⁴ Congressional Research Service (2018) *School Resource Officers: Law Enforcement Officers in School.*, 2018, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45251/3>.

⁵ Devlin, D. N. & Fisher, B. W. (2021). An examination of school resources officers as an approach to reduce social disturbances in schools: Evidence from a national longitudinal study. *Journal of School Violence*, 2, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15388220.2021.1875843>; Gottfredson, D. C., Crosse, S., Tang, Z., Bauer, E. L., Harmon, M. A., Hagen, C.A., & Greene, A. D. (2020). Effects of school resource officers on school crime and responses to school crime. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 19:3, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1745-9133.12512>; Stephanie Ann Wiley, *The Amplification of Deviance Following Police Contact: An Examination of Individual and Neighborhood Factors among a Sample of Youth*, July 2, 2014, 35, <https://irl.umsl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1244&context=dissertation>.

⁶ Flannery, D. J., Fox, J. A., Wallace, L., Mulvey, E. & Modzeleski, W. (2020). Guns, school shooters, and school safety: What we know and directions for change. *School Psychology Review*: 50. 2-3, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1846458>.

⁷ Maryland Center for School Safety (2025). *Annual Report 2025*, <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/326205466/>.

⁸ United State Government Accountability Office (July 2024). *K-12 education: Differences in student arrest rates widen when race, gender, and disability status overlap*, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-24-106294.pdf>; Welburn Paige, J., Bushway, S. D. (November 25, 2024). *The role and impact of school resource officers: A brief discussion*. Rand: <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/essays/school-resource-officers.html>.

problematic because data consistently show that in Maryland, students of color as well as students with disabilities are more likely to face a range of disciplinary actions in schools.⁹

Senate Bill 454 undermines the intentions of the district's *Building a Generation: City Schools' Blueprint for Success*, which focuses on Student Wholeness and Staff Leadership, supports relationship-building pedagogy, and the implementation of restorative approaches to school discipline.¹⁰ Lastly, under the Safe to Learn Act, school districts are required to have a plan that identifies adequate police coverage of school buildings. City Schools are in compliance with this requirement to ensure the safety of its students and staff. Arming City Schools police during regular school hours is not an effective practice to improve school safety or student well-being, and is likely to worsen school climate for Baltimore City children.

The CRSD urges the committee to issue an **unfavorable report on SB 454**.

For more information contact: Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline
CRSDMaryland@gmail.com

CRSD Coalition Organizations:

ACLU of Maryland
Advance Maryland
Baltimore Teachers Union
Center for Criminal Justice Reform, University of Baltimore School of Law
Center for Violence Prevention, University of Maryland, Baltimore
Disability Rights Maryland
Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE)
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Office of the Public Defender
League of Women Voters of Maryland
Out for Justice
Public Justice Center
Racial Justice NOW
Schools Not Jails
Strong Schools Maryland
The Choice Program at UMBC
The Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts at the University of Baltimore School of Law

⁹ Sunderman, G. L & Croninger, R. (2018). *High suspending schools in Maryland: Where are they located and who attends them?* Maryland Equity Project, University of Maryland College Park, <https://education.umd.edu/high-suspending-schools-maryland-where-are-they-located-and-who-attends-them>.

¹⁰ Baltimore City Public Schools. *Building a generation: City schools' Blueprint for Success*.
<https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/page/blueprint>

