



Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability

REPLACE POLICE WITH STUDENT SUPPORTS

SCHOOL SAFETY REIMAGINED

Every Maryland school district utilizes school police, also known as School Resource Officers (SROs), despite evidence that police presence criminalizes students for minor behaviors without addressing serious safety threats, perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline.

Current law perpetuates the harmful school policing model by:

- Authorizing school districts to utilize school police as the primary means of providing “adequate law enforcement coverage” within every school building (Educ. § 7-1508);
- Creating a \$10 million/year SRO fund, which pays counties to station police in schools (Educ. § 7-1508); and
- Establishing a standalone police force within Baltimore City Public Schools (Educ. § 4-318).

In 2022, the “Reimagining School Safety” bill will work to removing police from schools by reinvesting in student mental health services, wraparound supports, and restorative approaches.

There Is No Reliable Evidence that School Police Keep Students and Educators Safe

- Research has not shown that police presence reduces school shootings or other violence.¹
- One study found that an increase in school police presence did not decrease any category of school-based offenses.²
- Students’ perception that school police treat them unfairly can have a counterproductive effect on student behavior.³

MDGA22 BILL

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(Sponsor: Del. Jheanelle Wilkins)

- Redirects the \$10 million/year SRO fund towards student mental health services, wraparound supports, and restorative approaches – so that districts can hire counselors, social workers, school psychologists, restorative approaches practitioners, community school coordinators, and implement trauma-informed practices.
- Requires reporting on the use of force by school security and on calls to City or County police for incidents in schools.
- Strengthens the School Safety Subcabinet Advisory Board to include families impacted by school-based arrests, and experts in student mental health and conflict resolution.

- School police have made Black students feel less safe because of over-policing and racialized police violence.⁴

Police Presence in Schools Increases Student Arrests for Minor Offenses

- In national studies, students in schools with a police officer are five times more likely to be arrested for disorderly conduct and twice as likely to be referred to law enforcement

for run-of-the-mill fist fights than students in schools without one.³

- In Maryland, approximately 70 percent of school arrests are for fist fights without weapons and offenses like disruption/disrespect, alcohol/tobacco, and trespassing. The remainder are mostly for simple drug possession.⁵

School Policing Disproportionately Harms Black Students, and Students with Disabilities

- In Maryland, Black students receive 56 percent of school-based arrests statewide despite representing only about a third of the student population, even though data demonstrates that Black students misbehave at the same rate as their peers.⁵
- In Maryland, students with Individual Education Programs (IEP) receive 23 percent of school-based arrests* despite comprising 12 percent of the student population.⁵

What Are Effective Measures for Keeping Schools Safe?

Educators, researchers, and law enforcement have found that strategies to support students' positive behavior and strengthen relationships among students, staff, and parents are effective for keeping schools safe. Proven and promising strategies include:

- Restorative approaches^{6, 7, 8}
- Trauma-informed approaches^{9, 10}
- Providing wraparound services, including through community schools¹¹
- Special education planning and implementation^{12, 13}
- Hiring of mental health specialists, counselors, and community resource coordinators^{9, 10, 14}

If Maryland redirected the \$10 million per year it currently invests in school police, it could support districts to successfully implement these alternatives.

*This figure does not capture all arrests of students with disabilities; 229 school-based arrests, or 7% of all such arrests in the state, involved students with disabilities who have 504 Plans instead of IEPs.

Find more information about MCJPA's police reform priorities for Maryland, and the more than 90 organizations calling for them:
www.mcjpa.org

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