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## From the SRO Subcommittee:

We are in support of Bill 46-20 which would prohibit the deployment of School Resource Officers and instead use the savings to fund mental and behavioral health services. This recommendation is made by our subcommittee, with one abstention.

We take this position on behalf of all the Montgomery County students that we have witnessed rallying behind this change. When our students are out in the streets protesting with signs asserting "We need counselors, not cops", it is our responsibility to hear them. Over 30 student led organizations have expressed their support for the bill which includes, but is not limited to, MoCo For Change, MoCo Against Brutality, Young People for Progress, and the Student Member of the Board of Education. In addition to organizing protests, these groups co-sponsored a letter calling on Councilmember Jawando to introduce this legislation in the first place and have since produced infographics, held teach-ins, and met with government officials all with the intent of advocating for the removal of police from our schools. As the subcommittee with the two youth members of this commission, we take our responsibility of representing the young people in our county very seriously. We would be remiss if we did not express our full support for the bill on their behalf.

We would also like to highlight the aspect of appropriations. MCPS's counselor to student ratio falls well below the recommendation of the National Association of School Psychologists. This lack of support does not go unnoticed by our students. Our Subcommittee Chair Jasmine Williams, who graduated from Clarksburg High School last year, described how clear to her it was that the majority of counselors were too overwhelmed by scheduling and administrative duties to actually have time to address their students' mental health and well-being. We believe that if our budget speaks to our priorities, we are doing our students, especially our students of color, a gross injustice by allowing \$3 million dollars to go towards police in schools while ignoring the repeated cries for better mental and behavioral health resources.

Lastly, we would like to highlight the trauma that students of color face when it comes to police officers in school. Trauma faced by students of color does not only have to come from their own negative experience with an SRO, it can come from a negative experience with an officer outside of the school building or by simply turning on the news in this county and seeing another person who looks like you murdered by police officers who aren't held accountable. As a students of color, we may never have had negative interactions with our School Resource Officers. What we do remember is them walking the halls with their full uniform and gun on their hip, and that is enough to strike fear in the hearts of many young people of color.

We believe that if we let the voices of the young people in our community be heard it is clear that it is in their best interest to remove police officers from schools and reallocate those funds toward restorative justice programs and counseling services.



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