

Testimony of Mrs. Teresa Wright for The Policing Advisory Commission (PAC) on Monday, June 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm

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My name is Theresa Wright. I am a retired Parent Resource Teacher, who worked with thousands of immigrant students and their parents in the MCPS system for 24 years in middle and high. I started my career as a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in Mexico.

I would like to thank the Police Advisory Committee for giving me the opportunity to share my experience with MCPD. I would also like to thank Carlos Camacho and Juan Jovel on the Council's staff for assisting.

During my career at MCPS I had the privilege of helping children and their parents understand the culture and laws of their new home and guide them to a smoother transition on their way to reach their full potential. I invited Montgomery County Police an active partner. I hosted dinners, breakfasts and large gatherings in the school auditorium with MCPD to build trust and inform the new immigrants about local laws including laws on drug abuse.

Last year MCPD started the Opioid bus initiative, a trailer furnished as a teenager's room with objects that hint of potential drug use. Unfortunately, I retired before being able to use the trailer to educate parents.

Former Chief Manger and former Assistant Chief Luther Reynolds, who was my fourth-grade student, came to the school. Immigrants are primarily concerned about law enforcement collaborating with ICE. Once they learned that our police department does not ask them about their immigration status and protects them as any other person living or working in the county their fear is diffused and they start to trust the police.

As an example, Chief Reynolds, now the Police Chief in Charleston, SC, spoke before an audience of 300 immigrant parents at Gaithersburg High School. He started by mentioning that he was a graduate of Gaithersburg High School and that his children were going to school there and that he wanted all the children to be as safe as his children and all parents to feel that their children were safe at school. At the end of the meeting Chief Reynolds was playing with the kids and the parents felt totally at ease with him.

I would like to repeat some of my previous testimony on SRO's. I was fortunate to have worked with SROs in the GHS and WMHS clusters since the programs started.

SROs are a significant, caring adult in our schools. Many of our students lack a caring role model at home. SROs were always willing to take time and speak one-on-one to students that I took to meet with them.

In terms of career exploration, many students are interested in studying criminal justice and SROs would share their personal story about how they became a police officer. SROs were always willing to talk with students. It was beneficial for student to engage with police officers with a similar cultural background.

Another example of positive youth and police interactions were a series of youth-police dialogues organized by Identity and the City of Gaithersburg Recreation Department. Youth and police got a chance to get to know each other as human beings.

SROs have often collaborated with us in parent outreach meetings and often came to talk to parents about safety and security in the community and took questions.

I believe this is a very beneficial program and SROs have been key partners in providing resources and services to the community that I served so many years in MCPS.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to share my experience with you and for your work on behalf of our community.

Teresa Wright

June 14, 2021