

Nicole Kaplan
Silver Spring, MD

Testimony in Support of Bill 46-20 SRO Removal - February 4, 2021

My name is Nicole Kaplan. I live in District 4, and I am the parent of an MCPS student. I am testifying in support of Bill 46-20, which would remove School Resource Officers from Montgomery County schools and replace them with funding for restorative justice training, therapeutic services and after school youth development programming.

As a longtime resident of Montgomery County, I'm writing to voice my support, and hope to gain yours, of an upcoming bill calling for the removal and replacement of SRO's in schools. I've been volunteering and educating myself through Jews United For Justice and have come away with an overwhelming response to the research and student accounts that police in schools are causing more harm than good. I cannot remain silent when there are children feeling unsafe in their own schools. SROs can and should be replaced with counselors, nurses, and security guards whose training is focused in their various areas of expertise. No longer should police officers be referring students to court or otherwise interfering in typical discipline and adolescent issues. It's inappropriate and disproportionately affecting Black and Latinx students and students with disabilities. Schools are a place for students to learn -- but maybe more importantly, to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes. Positioning police officers in schools to criminalize the mistakes all students make ruins lives.

Montgomery County Public Schools is one of the top school systems in the country; a system I proudly enrolled my daughter in this year as a kindergartner. My hope is that she grows up in a community where all kids feel safe, not just those that look like her.

I know some councilmembers want to hear the Board of Education's position on this bill before voting. Unfortunately, the Board of Education's SRO workgroup process and report were flawed and sidelined the voices of impacted students and parents. The County Council created the SRO program, and the County Council has the power to end the program. I look forward to your leadership on this issue so alternate methods of care and safety for students can be set up before their return to school buildings. I urge you to vote in support of Bill 46-20.

Thank you,

Nicole Kaplan