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Potomac, MD

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

My name is Amy Zhai. I live in District 1, and I am a senior from Richard Montgomery High School. This testimony is in support of Bill 46-20 to end Montgomery County's School Resource Officer program. I would like to thank Councilmembers Will Jawando and Hans Riemer for their important work introducing this bill, and Council President Tom Hucker for your support of SRO Removal.

I never gave too much thought to the fact that I was suspended twice in fifth grade. This usually startles people when I say it, considering that I am an Asian American female who at the time attended a gifted program in Chevy Chase. I've always used this story for its shock factor as a fun, quirky story to share with others. Lately, however, I've been more cognizant of my relationship with law enforcement and how it relates to the different treatment I receive compared to Black and Hispanic students in the same schools I go to.

I wasn't suspended for something mundane -- I had actually gotten in trouble, twice, for bullying other students. But I took for granted the fact that I could move on from this unscathed, especially after hearing my classmates' stories of racial profiling from School Resource Officers. When I asked myself what the difference was between the light punishment I received for deliberately harming other students and the punishments Black and Hispanic students receive for essentially doing nothing, the only answer I could come up with was unfettered racism.

Walking through the hallways, I and many other mostly white and Asian American magnet students are permitted to skip class uninterrupted, while Black students are subject to humiliation and punishment -- even when neither of us carry hall passes.

The School Resource Officer program was ostensibly established to keep students safe — but what we have seen, and I have seen with my own eyes, is that it keeps students like me comfortable at the expense of a safe learning environment for many Black and Hispanic students in Montgomery County.

It is easy to voice your support for the "Black Lives Matter" movement, but unless the

County Council takes a stand on policies that will directly address educational inequity and the school-to-prison pipeline, your support will ultimately be performative. I respectfully urge you to support Bill 46-20.

Amy Zhai