

I support the removal of the SRO program from Montgomery County Public Schools because the SRO program is not only a problem for students of color, but a problem for various student demographics in MCPS such as survivors of sexual assault. Over the summer, as many of you know, numerous posts were published on accounts such as @lgbtq+at____, @blackat____, so on and so forth. One that stood out to me was the @survivorsatbcc Instagram account and I remember seeing at least three different posts regarding the poor interactions victims had with SROs. Although I am currently thinking of only three, I know there are more similar posts not only on the account I checked, but the @survivorsat____ accounts of other MCPS schools.

The posts I saw stated that it took a long time (up to a year for some) for SROs to reach out to victims of sexual assault to finally help them get justice. This, among many other factors, indicates the inefficiency of the program. Furthermore, the posts also conveyed how SROs failed to de-escalate situations and, instead, many SROs re-opened the wounds of these sexual assault victims. This isn't a surprise because SROs aren't trained for this type of work, counselors are. This further reinforces the need to remove SROs and reallocate those funds to getting more school counselors that will truly help students instead of further traumatizing them.

Furthermore, many testimonies that have been collected over the past few weeks prove SROs often act off their implicit bias. This not only relates to how they assume the worst of students of color, but also the implicit bias SROs have towards other minorities. I have heard many MCPS teachers tell me they will not talk about their political and/or religious beliefs because they don't want to ostracize any single student and take away from their teaching. However, I have heard just as many claims about SROs being racist, homophobic, etc. Now you may say those are baseless/false claims. No. They aren't when the claims of multiple students corroborate one another and highlight how several SROs let their implicit bias impact the way they treat students. This fact is also another nudge to the need for more counselors who are trained to not let their implicit bias affect their work.

The only time I ever interacted with an SRO was when they thought I had stolen my own phone and told me to "drop my attitude" when I questioned why they would assume that. Such a microaggression made me, a black female student, feel unsafe around SROs from that point on. I can only imagine what else could have happened to me that day if I didn't "drop my attitude." Would they have written a referral to tarnish my school record and impact how colleges saw me in the future? Would the situation have escalated into an unnecessary and violent arrest? Too many students are being subjected to asking these questions; a reality that further contributes to the toxic environment SROs create in our schools.

There is so much intersectionality in our school district and the SRO program fails most, if not all, intersectional aspects. It's also essential to note that SROs feed into the School-To-Prison pipeline and that pipeline is a direct feeder into the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC). So I urge you all to not let any more students of color, with disabilities, with sexual assault history, whatever the case may be, fall prey to neither the pipeline nor the PIC because of the SRO program at MCPS.