

Good Afternoon & Good Evening. My name is Jorge Sanchez. I am a Walter Johnson and a Montgomery College Alumni. I graduated from Montgomery College in 2019 and graduated from Walter Johnson in 2014. I attended North Bethesda Middle School and Ashburton Elementary School in Bethesda, MD. And have been a resident of Montgomery County for over 24 years. I would like to share my experience being a student of Montgomery County and be here in support for the bill that will remove SRO's from the public schools.

I would like to introduce everyone to a program that is called the Minority Scholars Program -MSP. I was a part of this program in high school, it originated at Walter Johnson, and was created by Mr. Mike Williams. Our goal is to close the achievement gap between Minority and Caucasian students in Montgomery. Over the years it has become a safe environment and a safe place for students to voice how they feel being students in Montgomery County. When I was student at Walter Johnson the minority student population was under 15%, now I believe it is over 30%. I am incredibly grateful this program was created, and hope many students continue taking advantage of it.

I would like to share a certain experience I had at a seminar at an MSP retreat that was created by students at the MSP retreat and the title of it was; "How to deal with a micro aggression"? Students came up with questions to generate discussion like; How to deal with a counselor when they reject you from taking an AP course? (When you have taken honors and AP courses in the past). How to deal with a classmate that touches your hair without asking? How to deal with a Security/Police Officer that is interrogating you on the way to class. What was really eye opening was how my Walter Johnson peers answered compared to my peers that went to Wheaton, Einstein, Springbrook, Northwood, and Kennedy. My peers at those schools, at schools that have a higher minority student population, those students spoke in fear about police presence in schools. Some almost did not want to go to school because of it. This compared to my Walter Johnson classmates, who thought police presence was only in our school to break up fights, like after a Walter Johnson v.s. Churchill football game. These are two vastly different perspectives but the same community. I am here to say SRO's are not the answer and generate fear in our schools. Especially when I see 83% of student arrests made in Montgomery County over the last 3 years have been Hispanic/Black students. Thank you so much for allowing me to give my testimony and I hope we can take another step forward in reimagining public safety.