

To: Montgomery County Council

RE: Support bill #46-20 to remove SROs from our schools.

I am concerned that having police officers in our schools is counterproductive for the goals of keeping students and staff safe and lessening the amount of violence in our society. I live in the Forest Knolls neighborhood (District 5) near Northwood High School. I am a member of the Montgomery County Branch of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). We have approximately 400 members in Montgomery County.

My wife and I volunteered in 2013 with the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center (MMYC) to serve as a host home for homeless teenagers. A significant portion of the teenagers placed with us were LGBTQI kids who were kicked out of their homes when they came out of the closet. Two teenagers stayed with us throughout their senior years and graduated from Northwood High School. Part of MMYC's training was on how to make our homes a safe space for everyone. With this training, we thought about how to make our home welcoming to everyone, including LGBTQI students. Police officers in schools convey the opposite message.

I am writing to ask the Council to support Bill 46-20 to remove Student Resource Officers (SROs) from our schools. The teenagers who stayed with us have already had enough trauma and fear in their lives. SROs are perceived more as potential threats to their personal safety and security.

The \$3 million allocated to staffing these officers should instead be used to provide our students with the physical and mental health support that they need. Our children do not need more cops in schools. They need nurses and counselors.

The MCPS students who have already testified on their negative experiences with SROs deserve to be heard. SROs do not make them feel safe. No Maryland or national study has ever found that a police presence in schools decreases school violence, and policing in schools disproportionately harms students of color, the LGBTQI community and students with disabilities.

These kinds of biases cannot be resolved by giving police more funding for training. The best way to stop the harm is to get police out of our schools, and provide our students with resources such as school nurses, school psychologists, special education resources, and restorative and transformative justice practices.

Please heed to call from Montgomery County students, parents, and teachers: we want police out of schools. Please support Bill 46-20.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard R. Renner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" being more prominent.

Richard R. Renner