

**Testimony in Opposition to Bill 7-21
Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships Within Schools
March 4, 2021**

My name is Vinny Prell and I live in Silver Spring in District 5. I am testifying against Bill 7-21 on behalf of Jews United for Justice.

I have been a teacher in Maryland and DC for the last six years. I often tell my students that you can't learn or grow without making mistakes. As a Jewish person, mistakes are especially important to me. One of our most sacred holidays, Yom Kippur, is all about reflecting on the mistakes we have made, apologizing, and growing from them.

Our schools should be places where students can make mistakes. Sometimes students will spell a word wrong. Sometimes they will make a horrible hypothesis for an experiment. These mistakes are expected. We do not bar students from college for making a mistake on a math test. We do not tell students who fail a spelling test that they will never be writers. They make mistakes and we help them grow.

Sometimes a student makes a mistake by hitting a friend, or breaking the rules. These mistakes should also be expected. Children need to learn to manage their bodies and emotions as much as they need to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic. When we put SROs in schools students can't be safe to make these kinds of mistakes, because they receive consequences far beyond what is appropriate for their age.

Bil 7-21 keeps the system that results in these severe consequences for students. According to the Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement prepared by the County's own Office of Legislative Oversight, this bill "will not advance racial equity and social justice in the County because it does not prioritize diminishing disparities in student arrests or suspensions by race, income, or disability status."

I join student advocates in calling on you to replace each SRO with a new on-campus staff person who can help meet the social-emotional needs of students. It is our responsibility to provide students with meaningful supports that help and do not harm. I urge you to vote against Bill 7-21.

Respectfully,
Vinny Prell