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Potomac, MD

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

My name is Amy Zhai. I live in District I, and I am a senior from Richard Montgomery High School. This testimony is in opposition to Bill 7-21, which would continue Montgomery County's School Resource Officer (SRO) program. I would like to express my deep disappointment with Councilmembers Sidney Katz and Craig Rice for introducing this inequitable bill.

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 firm stand against policies that will continue to perpetuate educational inequity and the school-to-prison pipeline, your support will ultimately be performative. I respectfully urge you to oppose Bill 7-21 and instead support Bill 46-20.

Amy Zhai