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**TESTIMONY AGAINST BILL 7-21 AND IN FAVOR OF
REMOVING SROs FROM SCHOOLS**

TO: Montgomery County Council

FROM: Carol Stern, Co-Chair, Montgomery County Leadership Council, Jews United for Justice

My name is Carol Stern from Chevy Chase, and I am the co-chair of the Montgomery County Leadership Council for Jews United for Justice. **I am providing this testimony against Bill 7-21 and in support of removing police (SROs) from schools.**

In Jewish tradition, *teshuvah*, repentance, is a core principle. Jews believe that people can always repent from their mistakes and bad choices, and **that society should be structured to encourage that process. Removing school resource officers (SROs) from schools is an** important way for our government to facilitate a positive educational environment rather than perpetuating the school to prison pipeline, which disproportionately affects black and brown students.

The RESJ impact statement made the case definitively that by maintaining the SRO Program **Bill 7-21 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.

Employing SROs is an unfair systemic structure that too often criminalizes student behavior and does not offer students the help they might need. In addition to removing armed law enforcement from Montgomery County schools, **I urge the Council to invest in a 1:1 staff replacement for SROs, such as licensed clinical social workers, who would be based in each school and would more successfully meet the needs of our students without criminalizing them.** Councilmember Navarro's statement is clear that it is time "to design a brand new model that de-emphasizes law enforcement in our schools and instead focuses on mentoring and mental health needs of our students."

As a mother and grandmother, I am horrified that in Maryland because of SROs in most middle and high schools, **70% of school arrests are for fistfights without weapons and offenses like disruption/disrespect, alcohol/tobacco, and trespassing.** The remainder are mostly for simple drug possession. These are mostly instances when police were NOT needed to handle the offense. Any

situation in a school that actually required police intervention could be handled easily with a 911 call.

I urge the County Council to vote against Bill 7-21 and to fully support removal of SROs from all schools, which will be a huge step toward eliminating the school to prison pipeline and creating the kind of educational environment where all students can learn and thrive and not be criminalized for their behavior.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Stern
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