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Testimony In Opposition to Bill 7-21
March 4, 2021

My name is Hannah Robinson, and I am writing this testimony to urge the County Council to vote against Councilmember Katz and Councilmember Rice's bill to continue the presence of police officers in Montgomery County Public Schools.

I am a proud graduate of MCPS -- I attended Rosemary Hills Primary School, North Chevy Chase Elementary School, Westland Middle School, and Bethesda Chevy Chase High School, from which I graduated in 2016. I am now a senior at the University of Maryland and a facilitator of the Bonimot Tzedek program, a social justice leadership program for Jewish teens.

In high school, the Jewish values I was raised with -- pursuing justice, or *tikkun olam*, -- led me to get involved in politics and activism. Just before my junior year of high school, Michael Brown was murdered by police in Ferguson, MO. In response, I began working with some peers from the Minority Scholars Program. We organized a discussion on racial equity, later that year hosted a protest at school, and they went on to produce a beautiful video, "I, Too, am B-CC," highlighting the experiences of Black students at our school. That year, it became painfully clear through my activism that as a white student, my experience in high school was drastically different than my peers who were students of color.

I was fortunate to always feel safe and comfortable at school. In my senior year, I was the editor of the B-CC school newspaper, *The Tattler*. We often stayed at school late to work on the paper, and one Friday evening, we accidentally stayed at school so late into the night that we tripped the alarm. An MCPS security officer came and questioned us about why we were at school so late. During the interaction, I was not afraid for my safety, or even the potential that I would face any serious consequences. That is how safe I felt as a white student at B-CC. While at the time, it only felt like a funny story, I often think back to that evening. How would I have felt at that moment if I was a Black student? Would I have felt safe, confident that I would not be criminalized in my own school? Or would I have been terrified?

While the SRO program claims to enhance school safety, it actually does the opposite. In a world where police disproportionately target and harm Black and brown people both outside *and* inside of schools, the presence of SROs in Montgomery County Public Schools strips students of color and other students who may feel uncomfortable around the police of the *right* to feel safe at school.

As an educator and MCPS graduate, I dream of a county in which every single student feels safe, comfortable, and supported at school, just as I did. This requires removing SROs from schools and repurposing those funds for initiatives that actually support all students, such as more mental health professionals and social workers. With this in mind, I emphatically urge the Council to vote against Bill 7-21.

Respectfully submitted,

Hannah Robinson