

My name is Kelly Ji, and I am a junior from Thomas S. Wootton High School testifying on behalf of the Asian American Progressive Student Union. We are testifying in opposition bill 7-21 and I am here to stress that the SRO program does not in any way benefit efforts for racial equity. I urge you to prioritize and listen carefully to the student voice when you are deciding what's best for us.

It has been shown and supported by a large portion of students of color that school resource officers make them feel unsafe. Black students make up around 22% of the student population but 43% of suspensions and 45% of arrests. Why? They are demonized and overpoliced by SROs. Same for other students of color and students with accommodations or IEPs.

It has been my blessing to go to school as an Asian American who is not disproportionately targeted by police in schools. I, as well as many of my peers, have been able to freely roam hallways without passes, commit disciplinary infractions without fear of being severely punished, and remain unquestioned by staff members. This is not the case for many of our own students. Student resource officers exacerbate this kind of behavior. They encourage minority students to continue to commit infractions and provide little to no support, despite what their "job description" may be. This is unacceptable.

This bill emphasizes increased training for school resource officers to target many issues in the system. These will not work. School resource officers have already been shown to have extensive implicit biases, proven by how they overpolice students of color and constantly overstep boundaries to do so. I'm sure you've seen the data. Studies have shown that implicit bias training doesn't work. *You can't solve racism and ableism with training.* Even if training did work, you are sacrificing the well being of students of color for the next few years **at least** in hopes that it will get better in the future.

This bill pretty much keeps the program the same, just with some added training. This new money going toward the program is money that could be going towards building communities, promoting restorative justice among **NON-ARMED ADULTS**, and patching MCPS's notoriously lacking counseling departments and mental health resources. This is exponentially more important because it's preventative. Students won't be getting into conflict if given these resources to begin with.

Also, I just want to point out the numerous references to the Obama administration in this bill. Recommendations made by his cabinet seem to be important in validating this bill. Obama's policing policies were historically heavily criticized as he supplied excessive weapons to the police force. He perpetuated the idea of heavily armed police, and SROs now police hallways of teenagers with guns at their disposal. His original intent for SROs being used for safety is no longer their most significant function.

I would again like to ask that you listen most to student voices when you make a decision for our safety and our future. Thank you.