

I am a senior at Montgomery Blair High School and a local progressive organizer writing in opposition to bill 7-21. This bill was created under the understanding that the police in schools program is, at its core, good, and that enhanced training will make it better. This is false. The presence of police in schools leads to increased student arrests, specifically the arrests of Black and brown students and disabled students, makes many students from marginalized communities deeply uncomfortable, and has been proven to increase the fatality of school shootings. While proponents of this bill have argued that it is often teachers or administrators who call on the SROs, rather than the SROs themselves who initiate arrests, they appear not to recognize that is a part of the problem. When police are so readily available, overworked staff will call on them for minor disturbances. Teachers and administrators who racially profile students will have the opportunity to translate this profiling into increased harm when they call on the police officer who is already in their school building to take away students they view as problems. Bias training for SROs will not remove ingrained attitudes. Studies have shown that bias training does not change behavior. SROs will continue to profile students based on their identities and target students of color and disabled students. Bill 7-21 is a clear attempt to counter bill 46-20, the bill proposed by Councilmembers Jawando and Riemer which would remove police officers from schools. While bill 46-20 looks to attack the root of the problem-- the presence of police in schools-- bill 7-21 attempts to gloss over it, putting on a shiny layer of ineffective training in the hopes that it will appease the community. It will not. We do not want cops with a little extra training in our schools. We do not want cops under the guise of mentors in our schools. We do not want cops in our schools, period. I ask that you support those working to make schools places of learning where all students, regardless of their identity, can feel safe and valued. Please oppose bill 7-21. Thank you.