

Good afternoon everyone,

My name is Mauricio Quintero-Aviles, I attend NorthWest High School, and I am speaking today on behalf of the Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association's executive board. We recently passed a resolution to fully support the removal of school resource officers. The Montgomery County public school's SRO program is racist, as by definition this program disproportionately negatively affects people of color at much higher rates than white students. The Maryland Safe To Learn act mandates police officers are assigned to schools, NOT inside schools. We have agreed that if we want to stop school shootings, what we need is better mental health support, not more firearms. Many teachers and students have expressed how unsafe police officers make them feel, our schools should first and foremost be a place of education. Police friendly communities can be built, but this does not require a police officer in the building. Communities are built when students invite police officers to their schools and open themselves to law enforcement, not when it is imposed. We cannot rely on other professions such as educational counselors or law enforcement. The most recent Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection (2013-2014), showed several disturbing results about our own state and county. Nationally, the student arrest rate was about 140 per 10,000 students, but in Maryland, the rate was 217 per 10,000, and in Montgomery County, the rate was a staggering 322 per 10,000 -well over double the national rate. The Restorative Justice Unit, aimed at fixing the root cause of students' issues only has 4 FULL-TIME STAFFERS for the 166,000+ students in the county. This is alarming data that shows that MCPS fails to supply programs that address crucial needs such as counseling, but continues to spend money on deleterious programs.

In conclusion, we, the representatives of students in Montgomery County support Bill 46-20, thank you.