

**Name:**Heather Neisser

**District:** 8

**Community Affiliation:** Student

Hello, my name is Heather Neisser and I am a 10th grade student at Walter Johnson High School.

I support the complete removal of all SRO's from Montgomery County Schools and I support the removal of traffic enforcement from the Police's responsibilities, along with a cut in the police budget as a response to the removal of these traffic duties.

I want to start by saying that since the duties of the police will decrease when traffic enforcement is stopped, money should also be allocated away from the police department into community safety programs and into funding social workers at all Montgomery county schools. Defunding and divesting from the police department is crucial in achieving racial justice in our county. SRO's create a constant environment of fear in schools and contribute to the overcriminalization of students in our system, particularly the overcriminalization of Black and Brown students. I have seen how an SRO intervention can escalate a situation very quickly and cause what would have been a small fight between students to turn into a potentially lethal situation for the students. SRO intervention is escalating and terrifying for all parties involved. Police are trained to police people, and SRO's are no different. They contribute directly to the school to prison pipeline and overcriminalization, and there is no evidence they increase safety in schools. The removal of police's responsibility as traffic enforcement will decrease the amount of interaction between the police and community members. Traffic stops are largely considered to be quite dangerous for all parties involved, especially when the person that was pulled over is Black. It is also almost twice as likely to be pulled over if you are a Black person or a Person of color than if you are a white person. These situations can turn lethal and there is no reason why police need to do traffic stops in the first place. These traffic stops are mostly done so that the police officer can meet a quota of tickets to increase funds for the police department. So these stops aren't about safety, they are about money. People over profits, just like any other corporation. Traffic stops do not increase safety any more than speed cameras and red light cameras do and they pose a danger to citizens of our community, especially Black and Brown citizens. For more information on racial profiling in traffic stops and the danger of traffic stops, there is an article by the Innocence Project that discusses these disparities further. Driving shouldn't be terrifying. No one should be holding their breath at a stop light because a cop has pulled in next to them. Fear is no way to run a society and policing is fear inducing in it's very essence..

Racial justice cannot wait. Safe schools cannot wait. Safe communities cannot wait. Taking action right now to decrease the bandwidth of police jurisdiction will make an immediate

positive impact on the community and will be a step towards racial justice. Don't wait till next year. Take action today.