



Committee: Joint
Committee Review: At a future date
Staff: Robert H. Drummer, Senior Legislative Attorney
Purpose: To receive testimony – no vote expected
Keywords: #BuildingPositiveRelationships-SROs

AGENDA ITEM 1
March 4, 2021
Public Hearing

SUBJECT

Bill 7-21, Police – School Resource Officer – Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships Within Schools
Lead Sponsors: Councilmembers Rice and Katz

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- Public Hearing – no vote expected

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

Bill 7-21 would:

- authorize the Chief of Police to assign a law enforcement officer to work as a school resource officer in a County school upon the request of the Superintendent of Schools;
- require enhanced training for a school resource officer; and
- require the County to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Montgomery County Public Schools governing the assignment of a school resource officer.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Should the SRO program be continued or modified?

This report contains:

Bill 7-21	©1
Legislative Request Report	©6
Economic Impact Statement	©7
Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement	©9

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M E M O R A N D U M

March 1, 2021

TO: County Council

FROM: Robert H. Drummer, Senior Legislative Attorney

SUBJECT: Bill 7-21, Police – School Resource Officer – Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships Within Schools

PURPOSE: Public Hearing – No Council vote required

Bill 7-21, Police – School Resource Officer – Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships Within Schools, sponsored by Lead Sponsors Councilmembers Rice and Katz, was introduced on February 2, 2021. A joint Public Safety/Education and Culture Committee worksession is tentatively scheduled for March 18, 2021 at 1:30 p.m.¹

Bill 7-21 would:

- authorize the Chief of Police to assign a law enforcement officer to work as a school resource officer in a County school upon the request of the Superintendent of Schools;
- require enhanced training for a school resource officer; and
- require the County to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Montgomery County Public Schools governing the assignment of a school resource officer.

The County Police currently assign 23 police officers to work as a school resource officer in a specific public school pursuant to an existing MOU with the Montgomery County Public Schools. Bill 7-21 would continue these assignments with the consent of the Montgomery County Public Schools with enhanced training.

Bill 46-20, Police – School Resources Officers – Prohibited, sponsored by Lead Sponsors Councilmembers Jawando and Riemer, was introduced on November 17, 2020. A public hearing on Bill 46-20 was held on February 4 with 33 speakers. Bill 46-20 would prohibit the assignment of County police officers as school resource officers in County public schools. Many of the

¹#BuildingPositiveRelationships-SROs

speakers on February 4 were current MCPS high school students. All but 2 of the 33 speakers at the public hearing supported the Bill.

Bill 7-21 would increase the mandatory training required for SROs but permit the assignment of SROs at the request of the Superintendent of Schools. Bill 7-21 would leave the decision up to MCPS. The Montgomery County School Board established a work group to study the SRO program and recently requested the work group to get more feedback from students and parents before deciding on the continuation of the SRO program.

The OLO Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement concludes that Bill 7-21 would not advance racial equity and social justice because it would not prioritize reducing the statistical disparities in student arrests or suspensions by race, income, or disability status. See ©9-16. OLO relies on statistical disparities in student arrests and discipline based on race and ethnicity in MCPS and cites research concluding that the differences in treatment of students for similar behaviors is due to implicit bias and discrimination.

OLO concluded that Bill 7-21 would have an insignificant impact on economic conditions in the County. See ©7-8.

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Bill No. 7-21
Concerning: Police – School Resource
Officer – Building Positive Law
Enforcement Relationships Within
Schools
Revised: 1/27/2021 Draft No. 5
Introduced: February 2, 2021
Expires: August 2, 2022
Enacted: _____
Executive: _____
Effective: _____
Sunset Date: None
Ch. _____, Laws of Mont. Co. _____

COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Lead Sponsors: Councilmembers Rice and Katz

AN ACT to:

- (1) authorize the Chief of Police to assign a law enforcement officer to work as a school resource officer in a County school upon the request of the Superintendent of Schools;
- (2) require enhanced training for a school resource officer,
- (3) require the County to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Montgomery County Public Schools governing the assignment of a school resource officer; and
- (4) generally amend the law governing policing.

By adding

Montgomery County Code
Chapter 35, Police
Section 35-23

Boldface

Underlining

[Single boldface brackets]

Double underlining

[[Double boldface brackets]]

* * *

Heading or defined term.

Added to existing law by original bill.

Deleted from existing law by original bill.

Added by amendment.

Deleted from existing law or the bill by amendment.

Existing law unaffected by bill.

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following Act:

1 **Sec. 1. Section 35-23 is added as follows:**

2 **35-23. School Resource Officers.**

3 (a) Findings.

4 (1) The causes of crime and violence in schools is varied, complex,
 5 and subject to change. Best practices for school safety recognize
 6 the need for a multi-faceted approach that addresses
 7 communications and emergency procedure protocols, building
 8 infrastructure, school safety plans, and staffing.

9 (2) President Obama's 2013 Plan to Reduce Gun Violence identifies
 10 the need for both law enforcement and mental health professionals,
 11 and advises:

12 (A) putting school resource officers and mental health
 13 professionals in schools can help prevent school crime and
 14 student-on-student violence; and

15 (B) when equipped with proper training and supported by
 16 evidence-based school discipline policies, school resource
 17 officers can deter crime with their presence and advance
 18 community policing objectives. Their roles as teachers and
 19 counselors enable them to develop trusting relationships
 20 with students that can result in threats being detected and
 21 crises averted before they occur.

22 (3) President Obama's plan provides a comprehensive approach to
 23 make schools safer, and envisions school resource officers
 24 working in conjunction with administration, teachers, and mental
 25 health professionals to:

26 (A) develop and update public safety plans;

27 (B) conduct threat assessments; and

(C) train “crisis intervention teams” of law enforcement officers to work with the mental health community to respond to and assist students in crisis.

(4) President Obama’s Task Force Report on 21st Century Policing (2015) also recommends creating programs and projects for positive, consistent, and persistent interaction between youth and police.

(5) The Department of Justice similarly advises that “strong relationships of mutual trust between police agencies and the communities they serve are critical to maintaining public safety and effective policing.”

(6) The assignment of school resource officers provides a significant opportunity to engage in nonenforcement activities with students in an effort to create and maintain that trust.

(7) Since Maryland began requiring all public schools to report arrest data beginning in the 2015-2016 school year, arrests in Montgomery County Public Schools have been on a downward trend and are far below the 2018-2019 State average of 3.5 arrests per 1,000 students with the use of school resource officers.

(b) School resource officer assignment. In this Section, school resource officer means a sworn law enforcement officer who is assigned to work as a liaison to students and staff of Montgomery County Public Schools. The Chief of Police may assign an appropriately trained police officer to work as a school resource officer in any school operated by the Montgomery County Public Schools upon the specific request by the Superintendent of Schools.

(c) Enhanced training and professional development of School Resource Officers. Prior to assigning a police officer to work as a school resource officer, the Chief of Police must ensure that the police officer receives training on:

- (1) de-escalation techniques;
- (2) mediation and conflict resolution;
- (3) childhood and adolescent development;
- (4) alcohol/drug response;
- (5) gang prevention and response;
- (6) truancy prevention;
- (7) child abuse and neglect;
- (8) culturally competent community engagement and outreach;
- (9) emergency preparedness and response to critical incidents;
- (10) threat assessment;
- (11) mental health triage and crisis intervention training;
- (12) trauma-informed response practices;
- (13) restorative justice; and
- (14) physical and developmental disability awareness.

(d) Mentoring. A newly assigned school resource officer must be mentored by an experienced and highly rated school resource officer during the officer's first year as a school resource officer.

(e) Memorandum of Understanding. Prior to assigning a police officer to work as a school resource officer, the County must enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Montgomery County Public Schools. The memorandum of understanding must be updated at least every two years to ensure the use of best practices, the need for additional training, and the effective use of data to enhance safety in schools,

positive relationships among youth and law enforcement, and equitable and restorative justice. The memorandum of understanding must include:

- (1) a description of the duties of a school resource officer;
- (2) the method to select and assign a school resource officer;
- (3) training requirements;
- (4) data collection and review protocols;
- (5) information sharing; and
- (6) investigation protocols.

(f) *Adherence to State law.* The County Police Department must continue to provide adequate local law enforcement coverage for public schools as required by State and County law.

(g) *Name.* This Act must be known as *Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships Within Schools or B-PLERS*.

[35-23] ~~35-24~~ – 35-26. Reserved.

LEGISLATIVE REQUEST REPORT

Bill 7-21

Police – School Resource Officer – Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships Within Schools

DESCRIPTION:	Bill 7-21 would: • authorize the Chief of Police to assign a law enforcement officer to work as a school resource officer in a County school upon the request of the Superintendent of Schools; • require enhanced training for a school resource officer; and • require the County to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Montgomery County Public Schools governing the assignment of a school resource officer.
PROBLEM:	MCPS is currently reviewing the use of school resource officers.
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:	Enhance school safety and build trust with law enforcement.
COORDINATION:	Police, MCPS
FISCAL IMPACT:	To be provided
ECONOMIC IMPACT:	To be provided
RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPACT:	To be provided
EVALUATION:	To be provided
EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE:	Unknown
SOURCE OF INFORMATION:	Robert H. Drummer, Senior Legislative Attorney
APPLICATION WITHIN MUNICIPALITIES:	N/A
PENALTIES:	N/A

Economic Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

BILL 7-21

Police – School Resource Office – Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships Within Schools

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates that enacting Bill 7-21 would have an insignificant impact on economic conditions in the County.

BACKGROUND

The goal of Bill 7-21, introduced on January 19, 2021, is to improve school safety and build trust with law enforcement.¹ If enacted, the bill would authorize the Chief of Police to assign a law enforcement officer as a School Resource Officer (SRO) in a County school at the request of the Superintendent of Schools. The bill would also require enhanced training for SROs and require the County to enter into a memorandum of understanding with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) that would govern the assignment of SROs.

METHODOLOGIES, ASSUMPTIONS, AND UNCERTAINTIES

OLO does not anticipate that Bill 7-21 would have direct economic impacts on private organizations or residents in the County. However, OLO notes that higher levels of educational attainment are associated with lower levels of unemployment and higher median earnings.² Given the relationship between education and economic outcomes, any indirect economic impacts of Bill 7-21 would depend on its effect on educational attainment for students. In theory, increased training for SROs could affect graduation rates by enhancing school safety and/or reducing student exposure, particularly students of color and underserved youth, to the criminal justice system. However, OLO is unable to determine the direction or magnitude of these effects.

No methodologies were used in this statement. The claims made in subsequent sections are based on the judgment of OLO analysts.

VARIABLES

Not applicable.

¹ Montgomery County Council, Bill 7-21, Police – School Resource Officer – Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships Within Schools, Introduced on January 19, 2021, Montgomery County, Maryland. See bill in Introduction Staff Report, https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccllms/DownloadFilePage?FileName=2698_1_14197_Bill_7-2021_Introduction_20210202.pdf.

² Elka Torpey, “Education Pays,” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 2019, https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2019/data-on-display/education_pays.htm.

Economic Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

IMPACTS

WORKFORCE ■ TAXATION POLICY ■ PROPERTY VALUES ■ INCOMES ■ OPERATING COSTS ■ PRIVATE SECTOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT ■ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■ COMPETITIVENESS

Businesses, Non-Profits, Other Private Organization

OLO believes that Bill 7-21 would have insignificant economic impacts on private organizations in the County in terms of the Council's priority indicators, namely business income, workforce, operating costs, capital investments, property values, taxation policy, economic development, and competitiveness.³

Residents

OLO believes that Bill 7-21 would have no economic impacts on County residents in terms of the Council's priority indicators.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Not applicable.

WORKS CITED

Montgomery County Council. Bill 10-19, Legislative Branch – Economic Impact Statements – Amendments. Enacted on July 30, 2019. Montgomery County, Maryland.

Montgomery County Council. Bill 7-21, Police – School Resource Officer – Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships Within Schools. Introduced on January 19, 2021. Montgomery County, Maryland.

Torpey, Elka. "Education Pays." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. February 2019.

CAVEATS

Two caveats to the economic analysis performed here should be noted. First, predicting the economic impacts of legislation is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, the multitude of causes of economic outcomes, economic shocks, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to *inform* the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the bill under consideration.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Stephen Roblin (OLO) prepared this report.

³ For the Council's priority indicators, see Montgomery County Council, Bill 10-19 Legislative Branch – Economic Impact Statements – Amendments, Enacted on July 30, 2019, Montgomery County, Maryland, 3.

Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

BILL 7-21: POLICE - SCHOOL RESOURCES OFFICERS- BUILDING POSITIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT RELATIONSHIPS IN SCHOOLS

SUMMARY

By maintaining the School Resource Officer Program, the Office of Legislative Oversight anticipates that Bill 7-21 will not advance racial equity and social justice in the County because it does not prioritize diminishing disparities in student arrests or suspensions by race, income, or disability status.

BACKGROUND

Bill 7-21 seeks to continue the School Resource Officer (SRO) program that assigns 23 Montgomery County Police Department Officers to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) high schools. Bill 7-21, introduced on February 2, 2021, serves as a counter to Bill 46-20, introduced on November 17, 2020, that if enacted would eliminate the SRO program. The County Council is considering both SRO bills at the same time.

Bill 7-21 strives to enhance public safety by (a) continuing the SRO program and (b) building positive relationships between police officers and students. Toward this end, Bill 7-21 seeks to embed community-policing principles into the SRO program. In particular, the bill would require staff training to improve their relationships with students. The goals of community-policing, however, can vary with the audience: while police departments may pursue community policing with the goal of changing community behavior (e.g. reducing criminality), communities' goals for community-policing often focus on changing policing behavior to reduce biased, unconstitutional policing practices and over-policing.¹

Currently, the SRO program operates at an annual cost of \$3 million. Bill 7-21 would continue funding the SRO program and add additional training requirements for SRO's that include de-escalation techniques, mediation and conflict resolution, child and adolescent development, gang prevention and response, truancy prevention, trauma-informed response practices, and restorative justice. These training topics align with a law enforcement goal to change student behavior rather than to change policing behavior and practices to engender greater student trust and community support. It remains unclear how the training requirements for Bill 7-21 align with current SRO training requirements.

If enacted, Bill 7-21 would:

- Authorize the Chief of Police to assign a law enforcement officer to work as a school resource officer in a County school upon the request of the Superintendent of Schools;
- Require enhanced training for a school resource officer;
- Require the County to enter a memorandum of understanding with MCPS governing the assignment of a school resource officer; and
- Generally amend the law governing policing.

Of note, MCPS also operates the School Safety and Emergency Management Program at a cost of \$20 million annually.² The School Safety and Emergency Management Program funds 266 positions, mainly for security assistants and security leaders assigned to MCPS middle and high schools, with a mission similar to the SRO program. However, neither Bill 7-21 nor Bill 46-20 recommends changes to the MCPS School Safety and Emergency Management Program; this program is expected to continue whether the SRO program continues or not.

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As the Council considers the merits of continuing the SRO program, MCPS also continues its review of the SRO program. A MCPS task force was expected to offer recommendations to the Board of Education on whether the SRO program should continue in January. The task force, however, did not offer recommendations then and has been tasked by the Board to do so by May 2021. MCPS principals and representatives from the State's Attorney's Office have expressed support for the SRO program, while MCPS teachers, students, and alumni have voiced support to end the program. The Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations is still determining its position on SRO's.

As noted in the RESJ statement for Bill 46-20, there are two questions to consider regarding SRO programs:

- Do SRO programs advance safety for all students without unfairly targeting some student subgroups?
- Are SRO programs the best use of scarce resources for improving school climates and student outcomes?

A review of the research suggests “no” responses to both questions. Further, prior research suggests that school-police partnerships, even those aligned with best practices, yield school discipline and arrest rates that disparately impact Black and Latinx students as well as students with disabilities.³ More specifically:

- Data compiled by the U.S. Government Accountability Office demonstrates national racial disparities in school arrests and law enforcement referrals.⁴
- A review of research by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights finds that schools with SRO's have higher arrest rates, especially for non-serious offenses like disorderly conduct, than schools without SRO's.⁵
- Researchers have shown that racial disparities in school discipline are driven by differential treatment and school-effects more so than by student conduct.⁶
- The Congressional Research Service and others have not found conclusive evidence that the presence of school-based law enforcement has prevented school shootings or had a positive effect on students' perceptions of school safety.⁷ In fact, some researchers have found that Black students feel less safe in schools with police.⁸
- Research studies have identified several effective approaches to improving student safety that include providing more funding for counselors, psychologists, and social workers;⁹ positive behavioral interventions and supports;¹⁰ and restorative justice,¹¹ social and emotional learning,¹² and empathetic discipline programs.¹³

ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Disparities in school discipline by race and, to a lesser extent by ethnicity, characterize both MCPS's and MCPD's interactions with students. As noted in Tables 1 and 2, Black students accounted for 22% of MCPS enrollment in 2019 but 43% of suspensions and 45% of student arrests. Low-income students and students with disabilities were also over-represented among student suspensions; boys and students with disabilities were also over-represented among student arrests.

The disparities in school discipline by race, ethnicity, income, and special education status are not without consequence.¹⁴ In the short-term, suspensions and arrests can undermine relationships between students and educators essential to school success. Missing instruction due to out-of-school suspensions and expulsions can set students on track for school failure and dropping out of school. In the long-term, school suspensions and arrests also increase students' risks for juvenile and adult criminal justice involvement. The increased risk for criminal justice involvement associated with being suspended, expelled or arrested in schools is referred to as the School-to-Prison Pipeline or the School-to-Prison Nexus.

The over-representation of Black students, boys, low-income students and students with disabilities among suspended and arrested students on MCPS campuses is consistent with state and national trends demonstrating the disproportionate representation of these students subgroups among suspended and arrested students.

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Table 1: MCPS Enrollment and Out-of-School Suspensions by Race, Ethnicity, Income and Special Education

	Student Enrollment (2018-19)	Out-of-School Suspensions (2018-19)	Difference
Race and Ethnicity			
White/Asian/Other	47%	20%	-27%
Black	22%	43%	+21%
Latinx	32%	36%	+4%
Other Characteristics			
FARMS/Low-Income	36%	58%	+22%
Special Education	13%	26%	+13%
Total Number	164,679	2,630	

Sources: OLO analysis of Montgomery County Public Schools Data

Table 2: MCPS Enrollment and School Arrest by Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Special Education

	Student Enrollment (2018-19)	School Arrest (2018-19)	Difference
Race and Ethnicity			
Asian	14%	*	n/a
Black	22%	45%	+23%
Latinx	32%	34%	+2%
White	28%	20%	-8%
Two+/Other	7%	n/a	n/a
Other Characteristics			
Male	52%	82%	+30%
Special Education	13%	25%	+12%
Total Number	164,679	163	

Note: * Less than 10 arrests. Source: OLO analysis of MCPS and Maryland Public Schools Arrest Data

So what accounts for the over-representation of these student subgroups and Black students in particular among students sanctioned in schools? Researchers have identified and studied three potential explanations:

- **Differences in student behaviors:** Disparities in school discipline reflect differences in student behavior among different student subgroups (e.g. Black students demonstrate higher rates of misconduct).¹⁵
- **Between-school sorting:** Schools enrolling higher concentrations of Black and low-income students employ stricter disciplinary practices than schools with lower concentrations of such students.¹⁶
- **Differences in treatment and support for students with similar behaviors:** For example school-based staffs treat Black and other student subgroups over-represented in school discipline statistics more harshly than student subgroups under-represented among sanctioned students.¹⁷

While there are examples of studies that support each of these explanations, the consensus among most researchers is that differences in treatment and support for students with similar behaviors and between-school sorting are stronger drivers of disparities in school discipline than differences in student conduct by race, ethnicity, or income. For example:

- Skiba and Williams find that there is almost no support in the research literature that disparities in school discipline by race or ethnicity arise due to differences in behavior. Relying on multivariate statistics, they find that race and ethnicity remain strong predictors of suspensions and expulsions even after for controlling for the severity of student behavior

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and teachers' ratings of student behavior. They conclude, "(t)here is simply no good evidence that racial differences in discipline are due to differences in rates or types of misbehavior by students of different races."¹⁸

- Ramey finds that minority-majority schools or schools serving a combination of students of color and low-income students were more likely to use exclusionary discipline tactics while schools serving predominantly low-income White students were more likely to encourage parents to seek behavioral (e.g. ADHD) diagnoses for their children in order to qualify for special education services.¹⁹
- Owens and McLanahan find in their analysis of the Fragile Families and Child Well Being Study that differential treatment and support by race for students with common needs accounted for 46 percent of the Black/White gap in suspensions among elementary students, while between-school sorting and differences in student behavior account for 21 percent and 9 percent of the gap respectively.²⁰

Tables 3 and 4 show that out-of-school suspensions in MCPS have increased by five percent since 2016-17, while student arrests have declined by 46 percent since 2015-16. This compares to a two percent increase in student enrollment since 2016-17, so the decline in student arrests is especially significant. However, disparities in discipline and arrests persist by race, gender, income, and disability status for arrest groups. For example, Black students accounted for 40 percent of arrests in schools in 2015-16 compared to 45 percent of such arrests in 2018-19.

Table 3: Trend Data on Out-of-School Suspensions by Race, Ethnicity, Income and Special Education

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	% Change
Total Suspensions	2,515	2,507	2,630	+5%
Race and Ethnicity				
White/Asian/Other	528	488	535	+1%
Black	1,120	1,154	1,143	+2%
Latinx	867	865	952	+10%
Other Characteristics				
FARMS/Low-Income	1,562	1,449	1,516	-3%
Special Education	651	622	692	+6%

Sources: OLO analysis of Montgomery County Public Schools Data

Table 4: Trend Data on School Arrests by Type, Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Special Education

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	%Change
Total Arrests	304	349	226	163	-46%
SRO Arrests	163	188	151	120	-26%
Race and Ethnicity					
Asian	12	12	*	*	-
Black	121	144	137	73	-40%
Latinx	98	111	55	55	-44%
White	61	*	16	32	-48%
Two+/Other	12	19	12	n/a	-
Other Characteristics					
Male	243	266	180	133	-45%
Female	61	63	46	30	-51%
Not Special Education	251	261	181	122	-48%
Special Education	53	88	45	41	-23%

Note: * Less than 10 arrests. Source: Maryland Public Schools Arrest Data

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Table 5 shows the significant overlap between student arrests and suspensions over time. In 2018-19, nearly 9 in 10 students arrested were also suspended compared to 8 in 10 students in 2015-16. Thus the vast majority of students arrested in schools are doubly punished by MCPD and MCPS. Possession of controlled substances, assaults and threats against students, possession of other weapons (not firearms), thefts, and disorderly conduct comprised 60 to 85 percent of arrests between 2015-16 and 2018-19. A third of students arrested were also suspended from MCPS for 10 or more days during this time frame.

Table 5: Trend Data on School Arrests by Suspensions and Arresting Offense

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Total Arrests	304	349	226	163
Arrests with Suspensions	237	278	190	144
Arrests with 10 Day + Suspensions	91	91	85	61
Arresting Offense				
CDS Possession	102	123	40	48
Assault, Attack or Threat Against Student	54	73	66	31
Other Weapon (not Firearm)	*	55	49	27
Theft	14	26	17	*
Disruption, Disorderly Conduct	18	14	18	*

Note: * Less than 10 arrests. Source: Maryland Public Schools Arrest Data

Finally, an analysis of student arrest data finds that five of MCPS' 25 comprehensive high school campuses accounted for nearly half (49 percent) of all student arrests between 2016-17 and 2018-19:

- Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School (72 arrests),
- Watkins Mill High School (62 arrests),
- Northwest High School (48 arrests),
- Paint Branch High School (42 arrests), and
- Clarksburg High School (39 arrests).

ANTICIPATED RESJ IMPACTS

If differences in student behavior or need by race were the primary drivers of racial disparities in school discipline and arrest rates in MCPS, then continuing the SRO program with strengthened training requirements focused on de-escalation, trauma-informed practices, and the like might be effective at reducing racial disparities in school discipline and arrests. But there is no evidence that student behavior or need determine racial disparities in school discipline or arrests in the County.

Research instead suggests that differences in treatment and support for students by race (i.e. implicit bias and discrimination) explain most of the racial disparities in suspensions and student arrests evident across public school systems. If differential treatment and support are the drivers of racial disparities in student arrests and out-of-school suspensions for MCPS (e.g. Black children are treated more harshly than others with similar behaviors and needs), continuing the SRO program as is would not improve racial equity and social justice within the County.

METHODOLOGIES, ASSUMPTIONS, AND UNCERTAINTIES

This RESJ impact statement and analysis relies on several sources of information, including Maryland Public Schools Arrest Data²¹ and MCPS at a Glance.²² Additionally, OLO relied on the following sources for background information:

- School Resource Officers in Schools, A Report to the Board of Education of Howard County, September 2020;²³

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- Maryland Equity Project, When Law Enforcement Meets School Discipline: School-Related Arrests in Maryland 2015-16;²⁴ and
- Education Civil Rights Alliance and American Federation of Teachers, Police in Schools: A Background Paper.²⁵

OLO recognizes that Bill 7-21 may generate effects beyond impacting rates of student arrests or school discipline actions. Bill 7-21 may impact police personnel, school administrators and staff, students, and school communities at large. Over and above what has been stated, OLO cannot predict whether these additional potential impacts will disparately impact persons of color and/or low-income residents.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The County's Racial Equity and Social Justice Act requires OLO to consider whether recommended amendments to bills aimed at narrowing racial and social inequalities are warranted in developing RESJ impact statements.²⁶ As noted, the SRO program's mission is to enhance the safety and security of the learning environment for students and staff. The SRO program, however, may have an unintended impact of reducing the safety and security of Black, low-income, and male students, and of students with disabilities, by criminalizing behaviors and actions that at best warrant a response from the MCPS Code of Conduct.

Researchers have identified several best practices for improving school safety that can meet the needs of all students, especially those harmed by current disparities in school discipline. These practices include:

- More funding for counselors, psychologists, and social workers;²⁷
- Expanding positive behavioral interventions and supports;²⁸
- Expanding restorative justice,²⁹ social and emotional learning,³⁰ and empathetic discipline programs.³¹

Research findings on the differential treatment and between-school effects as the primary drivers of racial disparities in school discipline suggest that policies and practices aimed at eliminating implicit bias and promoting school integration could also be effective at improving discipline equity in the County. Toward this end, Bill 7-21 could be amended to require:

- Training for SRO's and school administrators on implicit and explicit bias to counter the potential differential treatment of Black, Latinx, and low-income students and students with disabilities in the school discipline process.
- The SRO program to partner with MCPS to develop and implement a racial equity and social justice action plan aimed at reducing disparities in student discipline and arrests as part of its memorandum of understanding requirements.
- MCPD and the Board of Education to provide additional resources and supports to the schools with the highest suspension and student arrest rates to enable them to adopt best practices aimed at reducing disparities and criminal sanctions for fairly minor infractions (e.g. disorderly conduct, fighting).

As noted in the RESJ statement for Bill 46-20, OLO's School-to-Prison Pipeline report also offers a number of observations for aligning County practices to best practices for reducing the School-to-Prison Pipeline. These observations could be considered as recommended amendments for Bill 7-21 to prioritize reducing inequities and disparities in student arrests and sanctions. A summary of these observations follows.

Opportunities to Align Local Law Enforcement and Juvenile Justice Agencies Practices with Best Practices

- Engage with community stakeholders to annually review data and evaluate the SRO program
- Improve data systems to track the experiences of youth across agencies to evaluate the efficacy of current programs aimed at stemming the School-to-Prison Pipeline and supporting program improvements

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- Regularly review SRO arrest and juvenile court data to develop action plans to reduce referrals for minor offenses if warranted
- Consistently use school-based data and risk assessments to guide diversion decision-making

Opportunities to Align Montgomery County Public Schools Practices with Best Practices

- Develop a district-wide school climate plan that identifies needs and resources and monitors results
- Use early warning indicators to identify students in need of supports district-wide
- Assess students behavioral health and related needs and the districts' capacity to meet those needs
- Engage in a collaborative process with community stakeholders to annually review data and the implementation of the Code of Conduct and the SRO Program with MCPD

Finally, OLO Report 2016-6 offered recommendations for action from Community Stakeholders that can also be considered as recommended amendments for Bill 7-21. A summary of opportunities community members identified for improving local approaches to reversing the School-to-Prison pipeline follows:

- Deliver more services to address root causes
- Require schools to respond to challenging behaviors therapeutically
- Increase parent and youth awareness of rights and available services
- Enhance youth's long-term relationships with adults
- Improve coordination and data sharing among agencies and organizations
- Expand diversion opportunities for low-income youth
- Make schools engaging for high-risk youth
- Increase job and income-generating opportunities for high-risk youth

CAVEATS

Two caveats to this racial equity and social justice impact statement should be noted. First, predicting the impact of legislation on racial equity and social justice is a challenging, analytical endeavor due to data limitations, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, this RESJ statement is intended to inform the legislative process rather than determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the bill under consideration.

CONTRIBUTIONS

OLO staffer Elaine Bonner-Tompkins drafted this RESJ statement.

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