

Testimony of Parim Shah For Bill 46 - 20

My name is Parim Shah and I am a student in Montgomery County Public Schools. I am for Bill 46 - 20 to prohibit School Resource Officers (SROs) from MCPS schools. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I would like to make this testimony as brief as possible to respect your time.

Montgomery County Public Schools assigns 26 police officers (schools resource officers) to its schools from Montgomery County law enforcement agencies. Additionally, MCPS employs 249 security staff. However, the evidence is clear that police presence in schools criminalizes students for minor behaviors, reduces the ability for schools to have mental health support, and unfairly treats students with disabilities and students of color.

First, police officers in schools disproportionately and unfairly affect students of color and students with disabilities. This creates more inequality and injustice in our community. For example, during the 2018-19 school year, Black students received 45% of school-based arrests in MCPS despite representing 22% of the student population. In addition, there have been multiple accounts of black students being falsely targeted by SROs. In one case SROs followed a group of black students ready to arrest them, even though they were innocent. This traumatizes students and results in worse academic performance, furthering the opportunity gap.

Next, there are various alternative methods of keeping schools safe without endearing students and over - policing schools. For instance, anti - racism staff training, engaging social emotional learning, and trauma informed practices could be implemented to protect schools. This encourages positive behavior, strengthens relationships, and de - escalates conflicts without getting law enforcement involved.

Lastly, the funding put towards the SRO program could be used in other areas that can immensely help students. For instance, many schools do not have sufficient counselors and school psychologists. This results in mental health issues of students being neglected, causing mis - behavior. Hundreds of students in MCPS suffer from mental health issues and suicidal thoughts that can be prevented by schools psychologists and counselors.

In conclusion, I request that you use your authority to support the prohibition of SROs in Montgomery County Public Schools for equality in schools, students of color, and the mental health of students. Once again thank you for taking the time to read this testimony.