



**Testimony to the Montgomery County Council
February 4, 2021**

Re: SUPPORT for Bill 46-20, Police – School Resource Officers – Prohibited

Good evening, my name is Renuka Rege and I am an attorney at the Public Justice Center (PJC) in our Education Stability Project. We advance racial equity in public education by combatting the overuse of practices like suspension, expulsion, and school policing that disproportionately target Black and brown children and push students out of school and into the criminal legal system. The PJC is a member of the Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline. The PJC supports Montgomery County student leaders, educators, and community members in calling on the County Council to pass Bill 46-20, which would prohibit the Montgomery County Police Department from deploying school resource officers in schools.

The PJC has represented many students in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in suspension, expulsion, and Department of Juvenile Services proceedings. The experiences of our clients demonstrate why police do not belong in schools. I would like to share the story of one client, a Latino boy with a disability who was in eighth grade. After school, the student was waiting for his bus and playing on his scooter. The principal reprimanded him for having his scooter out. The student explained that the scooter did not fit in his backpack. Instead of working toward a solution, the principal continued to yell at the student, escalating the situation. During the argument, the student missed his bus. He walked into the school to call his parent for a ride. The principal and a school security guard tackled the middle school student and pinned him to the ground. They called the school police officer, who arrested the student for trespassing. The student was also suspended for a week.

This case is a clear example of age-appropriate student behavior that could have been prevented and resolved, but was instead criminalized because of policing in MCPS. This is just one example of the many students for whom school police do not represent safety but rather an early stop on the pipeline to prison. For these reasons, the PJC strongly supports Bill 46-20 and removing school police from MCPS. Thank you.

Renuka Rege
Public Justice Center
410-625-9409 x 272
reger@publicjustice.org

*John Nethercut
Executive Director*

*Debra Gardner
Legal Director*

*ATTORNEYS
Ashley Black
Monisha Cherayil
Sally Dworak-Fisher
Matthew Hill
Charisse Lue
John Pollock
Renuka Rege
Russell R. Reno, Jr.
Tyra Robinson
David Rodwin
Maria Roumiantseva*
Olivia Sedwick
Zafar S. Shah
Juan Carlos Silen*

*In Memoriam:
Levern Blackmon
1996-2020*

*PARALEGALS
Gabriela Dickson La Rotta
Aaron Frazee
Carolina Paul
Bethany Straus
Lena Yeakey*

*Brenda Midkiff
Director of Administration*

*Kathleen Gregory, CFRE
Director of Development*

*Erin Brock
Development Manager*

*Rebecca Reynolds
Development Associate*

**Admitted In New York only*

201 N Charles Street,
Suite 1200
Baltimore, MD 21201
410.625.9409
www.publicjustice.org