

## **Montgomery County Bill 46-20 Police-School Resource Officer-Prohibited**

### **Testimony**

Good evening,

My name is Djawa (pronounced Dwa) Hall. I'm the Political Coordinator for 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East MD/DC, and a Montgomery County resident. To Council President Hucker, members of the council and council staff, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you on this issue. I would also like to thank Councilmembers Will Jawando and Hans Riemer, specifically, for your leadership in putting this bill forward to prohibit County funds going toward School Resource Officers in Montgomery County Public Schools.

There are numerous reports and years of data which determined that having police officers in schools does not make students any safer or prevent mass shootings. The tax dollars spent by Montgomery County to fund police officers in schools, which criminalize black and brown students at higher rates - would be better served funding counselors, psychologists, and social workers, who could provide the trauma informed care many students need, more than punishment, for them to learn and thrive in their school environment. In fact, in three of the last five years the arrest rates for black students were three times the rate of white students in Montgomery County, and over ten times as high in the last school year.

The members of 1199SEIU agree with the Maryland Commission on the School-To-Prison Pipeline on the importance of problem solving, mediation, and addressing conflict resolution, which can provide trauma informed mental healthcare students need. This would not work without any security or safety officers on school campuses, however, does not require police officers hauling kids off and introducing them to the justice system. This option should be the very last resort, used only in extreme circumstances.

We all want our school aged children in Montgomery County to feel safe. This means allowing them to feel safe from police officers, which they've seen on the news abusing their power like the tragic events that led to the death of George Floyd. This means safety in the form of a future without a criminal record, which increases a student's risk for later involvement in the adult criminal justice system. We can do better for our black and brown students. This legislation is a step in the right direction to ensure equal treatment for disciplinary offenses moving forward, and a better overall learning environment for all our students. I am in support of Bill 46-20 and ask for you to vote to pass this legislation.

Thank you.

**Djawa Hall**

Political Coordinator, 1199SEIU UHWE MD/DC