

March 4, 2021

Mike English  
Silver Spring, MD

**TESTIMONY AGAINST BILL 7-21 AND IN FAVOR OF  
REMOVING SROs FROM SCHOOLS**

My name is Mike English, and I live in District 5. I am testifying against Bill 7-21, which would extend the County's School Resource Officer (SRO) program.

I've lived in Silver Spring for 8 years now, and Montgomery County has become very important to me. While I do not have children of my own, we all, every one of us, are making decisions for other people's children when it comes to issues like this. Children who are criminalized due to over policing-now not only have their own futures altered, but that of the entire county. The implications are vast and increasingly clear.

This will hardly come as a shock to you, but growing up as an upper middle class white child in affluent suburban Connecticut, I didn't have much to fear from the single police officer in my school, nor did most of the children in my almost uniformly white school district. Yet these students still misbehaved, still cut class, and yes, from time to time engaged in petty theft and other issues that could have, by legal right, called for the attention of law enforcement. Yet, exactly because we were white, this was far from an everyday occurrence. We all still graduated, still went to college, still got to enter the job market without a mark on our record, or worse, stuck in a pipeline to prison because of armed law enforcement. As the data shows, in areas with more diversity, the students that are criminalized for the same crimes my peers committed, tend to look different from me and the children I grew up with. This just isn't right, and half-steps will not right this wrong.

The national, state, and local data shows that alternatives to policing, such as social workers, restorative justice, and conflict resolution services, are more effective in supporting students than School Resource Officers. The data presented in the Racial Equity Impact Statement prepared by the Office of Legislative Oversight shows the harmful and inequitable impact of Montgomery County's SRO program on Black, Latinx, and disabled students and confirms that other student supports are more effective in creating a safer school environment.

Prioritizing recent, local data is all the more important in light of the report from the Board of Education's SRO Working Group, which was the result of a deeply flawed process.

The most reliable data -- and our County's values -- are clear. In order to improve racial equity, we must invest in counselors, not cops. I urge you to vote against Bill 7-21 and instead support a full repeal of the SRO Program in Montgomery County Schools.

Sincerely,

Michael English