

**Testimony in Opposition to Bill 7-21
School Resource Officer – Building Positive Law Enforcement
Relationships Within Schools
March 4, 2021**

My name is Quinn Spence, I'm a senior at Einstein High School, and I live in District 3. I am testifying on behalf of Bonimot Tzedek, in opposition to Bill 7-21.

When I first entered high school, I didn't see anything wrong with the fact that we had an armed police officer on campus, especially with the Parkland shooting occurring during my freshman year of high school. As I came to find out, SRO's were doing more harm than good in my school, across the county, and nationwide.

Constitutionally, SROs have no legal duty to protect the students they serve, as confirmed by the trial of the police officer stationed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, who was caught on camera fleeing campus during the Parkland shooting.

Though this bill quotes dated national studies of the Obama administration about the *potential* for SROs to protect students, more recent local data from Montgomery County's own Office of Legislative Oversight concludes that studies '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.'

But data does confirm that students in schools with police officers are five times more likely to be arrested on campus than their counterparts in police-free schools. Behavior typical of many teens, such as drug use and truancy, becomes criminalized when SROs are present. The SRO at my high school was casually involved in classroom activities, and even played in the school band, with no regard for the distress of students of color who were forced to share a classroom with an armed officer, handcuffs at his waist.

Montgomery County spends millions on the SRO program every year, yet we know that alternatives such as restorative justice programs and robust mental health services are more successful in addressing conflict in students' lives.

Bonimot Tzedek
Quinn Spence
Kensington, MD



I am set to graduate from MCPS this June, and I want to be proud of the school that I leave behind. I want the future of my school to be one that prioritizes student safety, not the school-to-prison pipeline.

As such, I urge you to oppose bill 7-21 and instead advocate for the full removal of police from schools.

Respectfully,

Quinn Spence