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Bethesda, MD

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO BILL 7-21
Building Positive Relationships with Law Enforcement Within Schools
March 4, 2021

My name is Rebecca Stanislawski, and I am here to testify in opposition to Bill 7-21, which would continue the county's School Resource Officer (SRO) program. I am testifying as an MCPS student from Bethesda Chevy Chase High School.

I am also a member of Bonimot Tzedek, a social justice leadership and activism program for Jewish teens. My Jewish identity has played a big role in sparking my activism when it comes to police in schools. The Jewish value of *chesed*, meaning the kindness and love between individuals, represents how issues of injustice affect us all. No matter what race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religion we are, we have a duty to stand up for those who need allies. After police killed George Floyd -- *and* Finan Berhe in our very own County -- in May 2020, I realized now is the time for change, and the more hands on deck, the merrier.

In sophomore year, a Black classmate sat at the table across from me in chemistry class. Our school's SRO frequently came into our classroom class and asked to escort this student out of class. This would happen at least once a month. Many classmates would audibly react with an "ooh" or a "he's in trouble." The SRO would walk up to the teacher and ask for the student to come with them, and the fear in the student's eyes remained the same each time he was asked to leave. He would not come back for the rest of the class each time he was pulled out. My classmate was pulled out of class, regularly, shamed by students, and missed critical class time because of our SRO.

The rates in which students of color are disproportionately targeted by SROs is appalling. Keeping SROs in school would only cause more feelings of anxiety when my classmates are already targeted by police in schools targeted. If the goal of SROs is to make students feel safer in school, we should be aiming for them to have those trusted adults they can come to in a time of need.

If the money that is allocated for the officers in schools were to be given to trained professionals who can safely offer help for students in need, the future of students' safety in school could drastically change for the better. I urge you to oppose Bill 7-21 and support of the SRO removal bill instead, which I believe, if passed, would make Montgomery County students feel much safer during the school days. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully.

Rebecca Stanislowski