

## **2022 Budget Hearing Testimony**

My name is Alix Swann, and I am a 2018 Montgomery Blair High School graduate. I am testifying today to the County Council with an ask. I am asking you to leave behind the status quo and work toward a brighter future by removing armed police officers from MCPS.

We need fearless leaders who will take steps into uncharted territory. Yes, removing School Resource Officers may seem like a scary idea before we accomplish it. But right now, we are seeing marginalized students, who are scared of police presence, being hurt and targeted by the SROs that perpetuate the school-to-prison-pipeline. It is much scarier to allow this fear and hurt to continue than to take steps toward imagining a better MCPS.

The County Council not acting to remove SROs shows your complicity in racism and lets us know that you are not actively protecting young people. By now you should understand that the student community has made it abundantly clear that they do not support the SRO program. As public servants, it is your duty to fight for what your constituents are asking you for.

In addition to removing armed law enforcement from Montgomery County schools, I urge the County Council to add to your budget a 1:1 staff replacement for SROs, such as licensed clinical social workers, who would be based in each school and would more successfully meet the needs of our students without criminalizing them.

The County Council has the chance to support Black, Brown, disabled, LGBTQIA+, and all students in the county by speaking out against having armed police officers in schools and speaking up FOR increased mental health supports and restorative justice approaches. Staying neutral means staying comfortable and siding with the oppressive status quo. So, I urge you to think about the type of environment you are fostering in our county by allowing armed police officers to patrol our school buildings. Thank you.