

Chicago Public Schools Board of Education,

As scholars of urban education who are deeply concerned with the well being of Chicago's youth, the research is clear: police in schools do not make students feel safer or create an environment conducive to learning. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) must divest from policing and invest in young people and communities.

A wide body of research clearly demonstrates that police in schools, often called School Resource Officers (SRO), increase student involvement in the criminal legal system<sup>1</sup>, especially for disabled youth and young people of color.<sup>2</sup> While research indicates that Black youth are no more likely to misbehave than students of other races<sup>3</sup>, nationally Black children are more than three times as likely than their white peers to be suspended, expelled, or arrested.<sup>4</sup> New data from CPS documents that Black students - *including those as young as six years old* - are subjected to police notifications at four times the rate of white students.<sup>5</sup> While Black students currently make up 35.9% of all CPS students, 65.77% were the subject of police notifications from 2011/12 to 2017/18. *Black women and girls experience school-based policing at seven times the rate of white women and girls inside of CPS.*<sup>6</sup>

The problem is not simply “a few bad apples.” Police in schools increase the likelihood that minor disciplinary infractions will be met with an arrest, rather than a “teachable moment” from an education professional the student perceives is invested in their overall well-being. Schools with SROs are nearly five times more likely to arrest students for the highly-subjective and most

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<sup>1</sup> Na, C., & Gottfredson, D. C. (2013). [Police officers in schools: Effects on school crime and the processing of offending behaviors](#). Justice Quarterly, 30(4), 619-650; Crenshaw, K., Ocen, P., & Nanda, J. (2015). [Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Under protected](#).; Finn, J.D. & Servoss, T.J. (2014). Misbehavior, suspensions, and security measures in high school: Racial/ethnic and gender differences. *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk*, 5 (2), Article 11.; Mallett, C. A. (2017). The School-to-Prison Pipeline: Disproportionate impact on vulnerable children and adolescents. *Education and Urban Society*, 49(6), 563–592. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124516644053>

<sup>2</sup> Annamma, S. A. (2018). [The Pedagogy of pathologization: Dis/abled girls of color in the school-prison nexus](#). New York, NY: Routledge.; Skiba, R. J., Horner, R. H., Chung, C.-G., Rausch, M. K., May, S. L., & Tobin, T. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review*, 40 (1), 85-107.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.chicagotribune.com/chi-070924discipline-story.html>

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/18/us/politics/school-discipline-disparities-white-black-students.html>; Office of Civil Rights Civil Rights Data Collection (CDRC). (2016). [First Look Report](#).

<sup>5</sup> <https://copsoutcps.com/2020/06/16/new-report-on-copsoutcps/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://copsoutcps.com/2020/06/16/new-report-on-copsoutcps/>

common charge of “disorderly conduct.”<sup>7</sup> Such criminalization undermines efforts to create a college-going culture in CPS. In 2012, the chief judge of juvenile court in Clayton County, Georgia testified in a Senate hearing that referrals to juvenile court went up *1,000 percent* (92% of which were misdemeanors) after police were placed in their middle and high schools.<sup>8</sup>

Increased surveillance and police presence in schools do not make students feel any more safe.<sup>9</sup> The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights report that Black students are 2.2 times more likely to be disciplined by law enforcement,<sup>10</sup> which in far too many cases leads to excessive force: As one example, consider the case of the Black girl from CPS’ Marshall High School on the west side who was dragged down the stairs, stomped and punched by Chicago Police Officers in January 2019.<sup>11</sup> The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law reports that police officers affiliated with Chicago schools have accumulated more than two million dollars in misconduct settlements between 2012 and 2016.<sup>12</sup> A 2010 study found that students felt *less safe* with armed police in schools,<sup>13</sup> and a 2011 report from the Voices of Youth in Chicago Education (VOYCE) similarly found that police presence in Chicago Public Schools and dominant school discipline practices did *not* create safe environments for youth.<sup>14</sup>

As educators, we want our classrooms and schools to be safe. Yes, violence happens in schools and in our communities, but while police may make some people feel secure, they do not make schools more safe. SROs funnel money and time away from teaching and learning, making schools profoundly--and ironically--*unsafe*, particularly for students of color, LGBTQ students,

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<sup>7</sup> [www.vox.com/2015/2/24/8101289/school-discipline-race](http://www.vox.com/2015/2/24/8101289/school-discipline-race)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/12-12-12TeskeTestimony.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Stern, A., & Petrosino, A. (2018). *What do we know about the effects of school-based law enforcement on school safety?* San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Available from <https://www.wested.org/resources/effects-of-school-based-law-enforcement-on-school-safety>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-met-marshall-high-school-taser-video-20190412-story.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.povertylaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/handcuffs-in-hallways-final.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2012/12/21/security-guards-in-school-scared-students-unclear-effect-on-crime/?utm\\_term=.8be4d8c97ae3](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2012/12/21/security-guards-in-school-scared-students-unclear-effect-on-crime/?utm_term=.8be4d8c97ae3)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/216318-voyce.html>

and/or disabled students.<sup>15</sup> Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPS) make up only 15% of the CPS population, but over 30% of police incidents involve students with IEPS.

The “Fair Policies & Systems” dimension of the CPS Equity Framework maintains CPS’ commitment to “promote equitable opportunities to reach equal positive academic and socioemotional outcomes...with an emphasis on those who are most impacted by structural inequality and inequity.”<sup>16</sup> Maintaining a police presence in schools along with deepening surveillance runs counter to the district’s intentions to reduce marginalization, minimize harm, and effectively center policy decisions in students’ lived experiences. A current CPS Mather High School student, Derianna Ford, joined a chorus of youth around the country in a recent *Washington Post* article to emphasize that they do *not* feel safe with police, and described the impact of the lack of funds available for social service professionals such as nurses, counselors and social workers in their schools.<sup>17</sup> As of June 18th, it is reported that school districts including Portland, Denver, and Minneapolis have moved to officially sever ties with city police departments.<sup>18</sup> As a leader in urban school transformation, CPS would be the largest school district to date to formally abolish police in schools.

In solidarity with Chicago [students and communities](#)<sup>19</sup> who desire to create educational conditions rooted in learning and authentic engagement, and in line with existing research on school safety, **we demand that CPS cancel its \$33 million dollar contract with the Chicago Police Department and invest in what we know will work to address harm, make our schools safer and our communities stronger.** Our students deserve more (and better paid) Black, Indigenous and Brown teachers and more trauma informed school staff, counselors and social workers. The district needs to eliminate high stakes standardized exams, support feminist/queer affirming sexual health education, and invest in curriculum, policy, and professional development opportunities that sharpen educators’ capacities to establish and cultivate schooling environments rooted in restorative and transformative justice. Funds

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<sup>15</sup> Annamma, S. A. (2018). *The Pedagogy of pathologization: Dis/abled girls of color in the school-prison nexus*. New York, NY: Routledge; Finn, J.D. & Servoss, T.J. (2014). Misbehavior, suspensions, and security measures in high school: Racial/ethnic and gender differences. *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk*, 5 (2), Article 11.

<sup>16</sup> Chicago Public Schools (November, 2019). Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Equity Framework: Creating and Sustaining Equity at the Individual, School and District Level, Chicago, IL. p. 28  
<https://cps.edu/equity/Documents/equity-framework.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/06/12/schools-police-george-floyd-protests/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/06/12/schools-police-george-floyd-protests/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cpsalumni4abolition.org/>

allocated for policing must be put towards more after school paid internships for young people, infrastructure in schools in the city's most underserved neighborhoods, books in libraries, animation workshops/athletics, arts, and many other supports that research clearly documents enable young people and their home communities to flourish.

Now is the moment to move beyond the empty rhetoric of care for Black youth. Act in the best interests of CPS youth and communities by foreclosing on police and working collaboratively to create a practice of school safety that builds on, extends, and facilitates the community cultural wealth and brilliance of Chicago's youth and families.

As researchers and scholars we are clear on the urgency of now. If the Board is committed to supporting all students, the Board must act with intention and duty and remove police and other forms of law enforcement from CPS.

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