

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council and Board of Education,

We write this letter to support the strong student movement to remove police officers from schools and uplift the work of student organizations such as MoCo STEPS, MoCo Against Brutality, Minority Scholars Program chapters, SGA-MCR, MoCo4Change, and many more. **We represent staff from all levels in MCPS and urge the County Council and Board of Education to prioritize student voice and end the SRO program to strengthen restorative practices.** We cannot claim “Black Lives Matter” or “all means all” while continuing a program that causes emotional, physical, and academic harm to Black and POC students.

Response to MCAAP →

We respectfully disagree with the MCAAP (Montgomery County Association for Administrators & Principals) position to maintain police in schools and call into question their voting process to take this stance. Was there discussion, student voice, or research presented for members to understand the issue before the vote took place? Their [statement](#) also neglects to mention the central danger to students testifying for police free buildings: racism and criminalization. Students of color, students with disabilities, and students in our ESOL program are disproportionately arrested, profiled, and experience harm under the program, as [discussed](#) by the past 3 Student Members of the Board of Education who also support removal. We call on administrators and principals to prioritize student voice and publicly support the call to divest in the SRO program and push for more counselors and mental health resources.

Flawed Board of Education SRO Workgroup →

Students and NAACP parent members have called into question the process and membership of the Board of Education SRO Workgroup report and [their concerns](#) must be taken seriously. Montgomery County has made a commitment to anti-racist practices yet the SRO Workgroup enabled biased decision-making, such as excluding empirical data. Representation was also inequitable: there were only 5 students of color out of 25 members and the group comprised 7 police officers. It is scientifically invalid to have police assess their own effectiveness. Students in the group said that they were often overpowered and intimidated by members who support the SRO program. Thus, the report findings should not be considered in future discussions.

Muslim Students Surveilled →

Another pertinent factor is the SRO program's role in targeting Muslim youth in MCPS as “conduits of information” from 2014 to 2017. The program, [Countering Violent Extremism](#) (CVE), claimed to identify criteria from which future terrorist activity could be predicted including “prevalent poverty” and “high unemployment rates.” Using this model, various Montgomery County organizations, including MCPD and SROs, were trained to identify “at risk” students and families. The widely discredited program violated civil rights and perpetuated Islamophobia. SROs referred students to “counseling sessions” where they were interrogated about their religious beliefs and political views. The harm caused to students and their families is irreparable and another example of the inappropriate uses of the SRO program.

School Safety Without Police →

What the Safe to Learn Act says is schools must provide a plan for “adequate local law enforcement coverage.” This contradicts much commentary related to the act’s stipulations. In fact, the law allows schools to create less harmful spaces, for example elementary and middle schools comply with the Safe to Learn Act without stationing police in buildings. Additionally, several districts such as Oakland, Denver, Minneapolis, Seattle, and even Toronto, CA which is larger than our district, have proven that removing SROs does not take away from safety measures in place at schools. SROs do not play a role in preventing school shootings as the reasons for gun violence relate to much deeper issues around toxic masculinity, white supremacy, and lack of strong gun regulations.

Research demonstrates the more police you have in schools, the more arrests take place ([Nance, 2016](#)). Montgomery County’s arrest rates are already double the national average. The rates only grow by placing police in schools. Moreover, police presence leads to escalation of minor situations and contradicts the restorative justice approach, which prioritizes repairing of harm over punishment. Numerous alternatives exist to protect and invest in our students. As MCPS staff, we commit to trauma-informed, healing-centered conflict resolution rather than allowing the criminal justice system to devastate our students and their families.

Thank you for your consideration,

Signatories: (updated on 3/23/21, click [here](#) to add your name)

Lauren Hurley, Teacher
Neha Singhal, Teacher
Nikki Woodward, Early Intervention Teacher
Kofi Frempong, LTI Coordinator
Tiferet Ani, MCPS Staff
Lauren Moskowitz, Teacher
Arely De Leon Barrientos, Teacher
Leah B. Michaels, English Resource Teacher
Valerie Coll, Teacher
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Sheila Rotkiewicz, Teacher
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Anjali Wells, Teacher
Danielle Neely, Teacher

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Michael Rothman, Teacher
Danillya Wilson, Teacher
Ben Israel, Teacher
Kevin Shindel, Teacher
Kenneth M. Smith, Teacher
Sarah Forman, Teacher
Porsche Vanderhorst, Administrator
Margaret Briand, Teacher
Julianne Foster Smoot, Teacher
Rebecca Sutton, Administrator & Parent
Heather Holmes, Teacher
Dana Sturdivant, Teacher
Kassandra Saravia, Teacher
Katherine Rodgers, Teacher
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Norka Padilla, Instructional Specialist
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Sarah Fultz, Teacher
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Teresa Brown, Teacher
Maria Gusman, MCPS
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Cynthia Krauchi, Teacher
Sommer Copley, Teacher
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