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## **Juvenile Defenders Join Call to Remove School Resource Officers from the Prince George's County Public Schools**

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The Maryland Office of the Public Defender (OPD) joins the call to remove school resource officers (SROs) from the Prince George's County Public Schools. Tomorrow, the Prince George's County Board of Education will be considering a resolution to end its contract with local law enforcement to place armed officers in its school buildings. [OPD provided comments from its leadership and the Prince George's County Juvenile Division in support of the resolution.](#)

OPD's comments note: "As we see every day in our work, the presence of SROs directly impact the school to prison pipeline, easily funneling black students into the criminal legal system. ... [T]he reality we hear from our clients is that the mere presence of an armed, uniformed officer changes the learning setting and escalates simple disagreements, contributing to a culture of criminalization and antagonism in schools."

The resolution is particularly urgent for Prince George's County. According to [data from the Maryland State Department of Education for the 2017-2018 school year](#), Prince George's County had 350 school based arrests that year, compared to 226 arrests in Montgomery County and 60 in Baltimore City. All 350 arrests were made by SROs, with 31% for non-violent offenses and one-third referred for prosecution.

While acknowledging the national outcry for reform based on the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, OPD's comments note the relevance of these issues locally and to the county's school children. In January, Prince George's County Police Officer Michael Owen shot and killed a handcuffed man in his police car; in June, three still unidentified officers were suspended after video surfaced of a Prince George's County police officer kicking a handcuffed man. The same police department selects and sends SROs into the schools.

"We cannot wait for a catastrophe at the hands of an armed police officer in our schools to make a change," OPD comments. "By removing SROs from our schools, this Board can take the first important step in dismantling the school security apparatus, and reimagine schools without police. Together, we can create the safe schools our students deserve."

The full comments submitted are available at: [https://co26acbc-bc5d-4cef-8584-0a0bde77d83b.filesusr.com/ugd/868471\\_3fe106d34efe4097af0d0b5d077b1182.pdf](https://co26acbc-bc5d-4cef-8584-0a0bde77d83b.filesusr.com/ugd/868471_3fe106d34efe4097af0d0b5d077b1182.pdf)

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