

June 14, 2022

Testimony in Opposition to HB 8310

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Erin Papa and I am writing as an educator, an active community member, and a resident of Providence, RI in ***strong opposition to House Bill 8310***.

Our youth have [made it clear](#) that police do not make them feel safe in schools. The youth of the Providence Alliance for School Safety (PASS) Coalition have a [clear plan](#)¹ to make schools a safe and positive space for learning and growing. We need to ***listen to and trust our youth***, as they are the ones who are most affected. They have done their research and put forth a viable plan that does not include police in schools.

The mass shooting in Uvalde makes clear that the function of school police is NOT to create safety. Police are unable to prevent harm, nor do they increase the overall safety of a school. Research/studies on police in schools confirm that police do not create safety, they create harm.² (see also the history timeline: <https://policefreeschools.org/timeline/>)

We can't let history repeat itself. After each school mass shooting, the response to valid safety concerns is to add police, security guards, metal detectors, and surveillance cameras to school. It's a reactive approach that continues to fail our young people and families

The **best defense** against a school shooting has always been a **positive school climate and engaged learning community**. This includes dismantling school policing, investing in comprehensive mental and emotional health services and support staff, and an expansion of restorative justice practices. It also includes gun control that does not result in increased policing of Black and Brown people or people with disabilities. Strong communities and positive environments are our best defense against the manifestation of isolation, white supremacy and the pro-gun culture of America.

Listen to and trust our youth. Stop HB 8310 from advancing. For the future of Rhode Island.

Thank you,
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<https://upriseri.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Providence-Alliance-For-Student-Safety-Plan-FINAL.pdf>

² <https://www.edworkingpapers.com/ai21-476>,
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2776515>.