

Steven Sepe

From: Justin Roias <justinroias@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 14, 2022 4:15 PM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Justin Roias: Opposition to H8310

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Justin Roias, and I am a school social worker, mental health counselor, and candidate for Providence City Council. I wanted to take this time to add my voice to the growing opposition to **H8310**. In my view, this bill undermines the work of youth across Rhode Island who have led the *counselors, not cops* campaign, a movement that advocates for police-free schools and more investments in school safety by putting our community's needs first. Furthermore, this bill is a short-sighted knee-jerk reaction to the recent school shootings that have crippled our country. I want to echo what most have already said: School Resource Officers (SROs) have no training in child development or mental health. Their purpose is to police schools, the same as they would on the streets. There is zero evidence that they make schools safer. In fact, the presence of SROs in schools has had the opposite effect and the latest mass school shooting only makes that clearer. At this moment we must loudly resist the urge to hire more police in our schools and instead, invest in nurses, school psychologists, and social workers — the very people who play a pivotal role in stopping school shootings and supporting students through the many traumatic crises they are experiencing.

Should you have questions, please feel free to contact me at Justinroias@gmail.com and/or 401-282-9978

Best,
Justin