

LIVE UNITED



United Way of Rhode Island

50 Valley Street
Providence, RI 02909-2459
Phone (401) 444.0600
Fax (401) 444.0635

Error! Hyperlink

reference not valid.

June 14, 2022

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chairman, House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 8310 AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION (Adds direct state support for costs associated with employing school resource officers.) with Strong Opposition to Section 7(i) School Resource Officers

To Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

United Way of Rhode Island submits the following statement in support of **House Bill No. 8310** an act related to education, with **strong opposition to Section 7(i) School Resource Officers** as the mere presence of guns in schools has caused significant damage and trauma to our youth, teachers, and administrators. Although the legislation, on its face, is introduced to better protect our youth in schools, we also know that more guns in schools is not the answer to increased school safety.

According to the National Association of School Resource Officers, there are somewhere between 14,000 and 20,000 school resource officers in United States schools.ⁱ The NASRO website indicates that "Carefully selected, specially trained school resource officers who follow NASRO's best practices do not arrest students for disciplinary issues that would be handled by teachers and/or administrators if the SROs were not there." An Education Week analysis titled "Policing in American Schools"ⁱⁱ indicates that in the 2013-2014 school year 182 students were arrested, more than one student per academic day. This is particularly troubling considering the overrepresentation of Black and Hispanic student arrests (Blacks 18.7%, Latinos 20.9%). This overrepresentation and subsequent community-based interactions with law enforcement cause significant trauma and undermine the wellbeing of Black and Hispanic students.

After the pandemic, the topics of ACEs, trauma, toxic stress, and mental health are urgently relevant, and it is imperative to address, support and uplift youth mental health. An additional

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

LIVE UNITED



United Way of Rhode Island

50 Valley Street
Providence, RI 02909-2459
Phone (401) 444.0600
Fax (401) 444.0635

Error! Hyperlink

reference not valid.

SRO would contribute to the negative experiences of Black and Hispanic youth and further hinder their emotional and mental stability while in school. Data and strategies introduced in the [2022 U.S Surgeon General's advisory: Protecting Youth Mental Health](#), identified high quality after school programs that encourage PCEs, or Positive Childhood Experiences that build resilience and enhance youth wellbeing as a solution to the Surgeon General's "urgent public health crisis" pertaining to youth mental health. [Research](#) has proven the multitude of benefits awarded to youth, most notably after school programming has consistent contribution to youth social and emotional skills through the implementation of programs that provide comprehensive supports needed for the mental and emotional stability of young people.

We have seen first-hand the opportunities afforded to our children and youth in addressing Type II Trauma when supportive environments are able to design de-escalation strategies in concert with students. The buy in created is meaningful and informative to other students in each classroom who can then support their peers in averting difficult behaviors. We also know that educators are given introductory training in these areas and need additional supports from other adults in the school buildings and throughout the districts.

At United Way, we are also aware of educators impacted by Secondary Trauma, where one's own experiences become transformed through engagement with an individual's trauma. This is also known as compassion fatigue trauma. Our educators meet our children and youth where they are and need additional resources and strategies to address the challenges they face day in and out.

For these reasons, United Way of Rhode Island urges the House Committee on Finance to reject more guns in schools. Instead let's find common sense solutions to secure our schools and reduce the trauma experienced in them.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully requests your support of **House Bill No. [8310](#)** an act related to education, and to **eliminate Section 7(i) School Resource Officers.**

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

LIVE UNITED



United Way of Rhode Island

50 Valley Street
Providence, RI 02909-2459
Phone (401) 444.0600
Fax (401) 444.0635

Error! Hyperlink

reference not valid.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cortney Nicolato".

Cortney Nicolato
President and CEO

Cc: Rep. Scott Slater, First Vice Chair
Rep. Alex Marszalkowski, Second Vice Chair
Rep. Gregg Amore
Rep. Jacquelyn M. Baginski
Rep. Jean-Philippe Barros
Rep. Grace Diaz
Rep. John G. Edwards
Rep. Raymond A. Hull
Rep. George A. Nardone
Rep. William W. O'Brien
Rep. Robert J. Quattrocchi
Rep. Deborah Ruggiero
Rep. Carlos E. Tobon
Rep. Camille Vella-Wilkinson

Hon. K. Joseph Shekarchi, Speaker of the House

<https://www.nasro.org/faq/#:~:text=The%20National%20Association%20of%20School,SROs%20that%20NASRO%20has%20trained.>

<https://www.edweek.org/which-students-are-arrested-most-in-school-u-s-data-by-school#/overview>

Cc:
Rep. Scott Slater, First Vice Chair
Rep. Alex Marszalkowski, Second Vice Chair

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

LIVE UNITED



United Way of Rhode Island

50 Valley Street
Providence, RI 02909-2459
Phone (401) 444.0600
Fax (401) 444.0635

Error! Hyperlink

reference not valid.

Rep. Gregg Amore
Rep. Jacquelyn Baginski
Rep. Jean-Philippe Barros
Rep. Grace Diaz
Rep. John Edwards
Rep. Raymond Hull
Rep. George Nardone
Rep. William O'Brien
Rep. Robert Quattrocchi
Rep. Deborah Ruggiero
Rep. Carlos Tobon
Rep. Camille Vella-Wilkinson

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.