

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

Dear members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Peter Chung. I am a resident of the City of Providence and a parent of a Providence Public School student. I also work here in Providence at Young Voices as the Executive Director. Today, I am here to testify in strong opposition of House Bill 8310, which calls for "two (2) school resource officers to be placed at every public school in the State of Rhode Island.

My first reaction when I saw this bill was to ask "Why are we turning our public schools into prisons?" This is a very harmful bill especially for communities of color. I cannot believe that the kneejerk reaction to student safety in our schools is to lean in on the failing system that continues to marginalize our black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) students and perpetuate the school to prison pipeline.

I highly recommend that instead of placing 2 school resource officers in every public school, we invest in the following wrap around services that have proven to support the social emotional learning of our students as well as their safety in schools. We need to:

- Invest in more school support staff that includes mental health workers, guidance counselors, nurses, and social workers who can provide comprehensive mental and emotional supports for students and teachers.
- Invest in on going professional development for faculty and administrators in restorative justice to improve school culture and belonging and to shift from the use of punitive discipline practices.
- Removing current SRO's from our schools because students deserve a model of school safety that promotes dignity and respect.
- Invest in trauma informed schools that uses evidence-based practices that build social-emotional skills into rigorous academic instruction.

I urge you to consider how harmful this bill will have on our communities if it passes. Please invest in the services that supports the mental health of our students, teachers and families. SROs in our schools is not the answer.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Peter Chung,  
Providence resident