



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

**COUNCILMEMBER NANCY NAVARRO
DISTRICT 4**

**CHAIR, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND
FISCAL POLICY COMMITTEE**

EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

March 3, 2021

TO: Sidney Katz, Chair, Public Safety Committee
Craig Rice, Chair, Education and Culture Committee

FROM: Nancy Navarro, Chair, Government Operations & Fiscal Policy Committee

SUBJECT: Proposed amendment to bills on School Resource Officers

The Public Safety (PS) Committee and the Education (E&S) Committee will be holding a joint session on two bills that address the future of School Resource Officers (SROs) in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). [Bill 46-20](#), *School Resources Officers – Prohibited* (introduced by lead sponsors Will Jawando and Hans Riemer on November 17, 2020, with a public hearing held on February 4, 2021), would prohibit the Montgomery County Police Department from deploying school resource officers in schools. [Bill 7-21](#), *Police – School Resource Officer – Building Positive Law Enforcement Relationships Within Schools* (introduced by lead sponsors Craig Rice and Sidney Katz on February 2, 2021, with public hearing scheduled for March 4, 2021), would authorize the Chief of Police to assign a law enforcement officer to work as a school resource officer in a County school upon the request of the Superintendent of Schools, with a requirement for enhanced training for a school resource officer.

It is appropriate that the PS/EC joint committee session is taking up both bills at the same time. This approach allows the Council ultimately to take a holistic approach. It affirms the fact that we all have a shared interest – how to focus on our students' mental and emotional well-being without compromising their physical safety as our parents and students expect, and as mandated by state law.

After listening to the community, especially our youth, studying both bills and related proposals in the General Assembly, the reports of the Reimagining Safety Task Force workgroup as well as the school system's workgroup, I am proposing a model that eliminates the current SRO model, de-emphasizes a law enforcement focus within our schools and instead focuses on the mentoring and mental health needs

of students. However, it includes a Public Safety cluster model comprised of Police Officers, mental health professionals and Positive Youth Development staff. This approach Patterned after the Kennedy Cluster model which I worked on and helped implement in 2007 when I was President of the Board of Education, this model would incorporate multi-agency and interdepartmental collaboration, Positive Youth Development (PYD) initiatives, and mental health support that our County has previously invested in, and that can be strengthened with nationally recognized programs.

On February 5th, I sent a memorandum to County Executive Marc Elrich, outlining my alternative option to the physical presence of SROs in schools (attached). I have since met with the County Executive, the Police Chief, the leadership of the department of Health and Human Services, and MCPS to make sure that this approach can be implemented. I am pleased with their feedback and their proactive work in this space. The County Executive has shared his proposed cluster model with me, and I look forward to us working with him as a team to stand up a policy and an instrument that have the teeth and compassion to support and protect our students.

My amendment to the proposed bills is attached. For purposes of the joint committee's work, I have chosen to amend Bill 46-20 with this team model and incorporate training for the team members with the requirements in Bill 7-21. The result is a new structure that addresses all the concerns I have heard, and that is also consistent with the research findings and recommendations of the Office of Legislative Oversight. In summary, under the umbrella of Racial Equity and Social Justice, my proposed amendment:

- Creates a team that resides outside the schools and moves SROs out of school facilities and into a “cluster” model.
- Includes PYD initiatives and mental health supports in the “cluster” model with appropriate training for team members.
- Defines and restricts the offenses for which school personnel can call the law enforcement team.
- Enhances school-based services and student-centered supports (pupil personnel workers, counselors, Parent Community Coordinators, Street Outreach Network, Wellness centers, Linkages to Learning, and other student-centered programs). In addition, there should be an awareness program for school personnel to make sure they are informed of the availability of student support services, so they may promote prevention.

In closing I would like to sincerely thank Councilmembers Jawando, Rice, Riemer, Katz and County Executive Elrich for all their work on this issue. I appreciate their commitment to racial equity and social justice, and a truly re-imagined public safety structure. We have an opportunity here to provide the appropriate leadership as a team and rally behind the joint committee as it puts forward a recommendation to the full council.

Copy to:

Members of the County Council

Marc Elrich, County Executive

Brenda Wolff, President, Montgomery County Board of Education

Jack Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Raymond Crowel, Director, Health and Human Services

Marcus Jones, Chief of Police

Attachment

Bill 46-20 - Navarro Amendment 1

Amend lines 23-30 as follows:

- (8) Montgomery County Public Schools fall well short of the student to mental health and counseling staff ratios recommended by the National Association of School Psychologists and the American School Counselor Association; [[and]]
- (9) students of color would benefit from more opportunity to speak with therapists, nurses, and school psychologists with diverse backgrounds who can speak to the challenges they are facing; and
- (10) Montgomery County Public Schools must enhance mental health and counseling support for students.

Add the following after line 40:

- (d) Local law enforcement coverage program for public schools. The Executive must establish a local law enforcement coverage program for each public school that incorporates positive youth development principles while prioritizing safety through the use of multidisciplinary school teams that are not based in a school. The Chief of Police must assign police officers to different geographic areas to work on a school team with mental health professionals and counselors assigned by the Director of Health and Human Services. Each member of the school team must receive training on:
 - (1) de-escalation techniques;
 - (2) mediation and conflict resolution;
 - (3) childhood and adolescent development;
 - (4) alcohol/drug response;
 - (5) gang prevention and response;
 - (6) truancy prevention;
 - (7) child abuse and neglect;

- (8) culturally competent community engagement and outreach;
 - (9) emergency preparedness and response to critical incidents;
 - (10) threat assessment;
 - (11) mental health triage and crisis intervention;
 - (12) trauma-informed response practices;
 - (13) restorative justice;
 - (14) physical and developmental disability awareness; and
 - (16) mentoring.
- (e) Memorandum of Understanding. The Executive must negotiate a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Superintendent of Schools establishing guidelines for the operation of the school teams established under subsection (d). The MOU must:
- (1) include a comprehensive data sharing agreement between the Police Department and the Montgomery County Public Schools; and
 - (2) define the type of issues that:
 - (A) should result in a call for law enforcement assistance; and
 - (B) should be handled as a school discipline matter instead of a call for law enforcement assistance.
- (f) Reporting. The Chief of Police, after consulting with the Superintendent of Schools, must submit an annual written report to the Executive and the Council on or about July 15 of each year that includes:
- (1) the number and discipline of personnel assigned to each school team during the school year;
 - (2) the number of calls for law enforcement assistance for each school during the school year;
 - (3) the number of arrests of a student at each school broken down by race, gender, ethnicity, and disability during the school year;
 - (4) a description of each incident that resulted in an arrest of a student;

- (5) recommendations for improvements in the program; and
- (6) any other metrics that can be used to measure success of the program.