

Public Hearing Comments on Police MOU

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I strongly encourage Alexandria City Public Schools to end the Memorandum of Understanding with the Alexandria Police Department.

While the goal of the MOU may be to build a positive and safe environment in our schools, facts on the ground simply do not support that assertion. Quite the opposite: studies show that the presence of SROs is linked with increasing arrests for non-criminal behavior and the exacerbation of racial disparities in the youth justice system.

Because SROs are law enforcement officers, they tend to treat infractions as matters for law enforcement. As a result, schools with SROs have a disproportionate rate of arrests for non-violent behavior. When controlling for poverty, it has been shown that schools with SROs have double the rate of non-violent disorderly conduct arrests compared to schools without SROs. This is where the school-to-prison pipeline begins.

These practices disproportionately affect students of color. In a 2015 study, Black students accounted for 36 percent of arrests despite being only 15 percent of the school population, whereas white students, who made up 50 percent of the school population, accounted for only 33 percent of arrests.

In conclusion, while no doubt well-intentioned, the MOU between ACPS and APD is harmful to Alexandria students, particularly students of color. Our resources would be better spent on counselors, nurses, psychologists, social workers, and others who are equipped to address behavior issues without criminalizing our children.