**Report of School Climate & Safety Committee Submitted by: Rob Wilcox**

 **December 12, 2020 \_ \_ climateandsafety@mccpta.org**

**Since November 1 -- Meetings/Calls/Events:**

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| 11/911/1612/112/15 | SRO Working Group Meeting MCCPTA DEI MeetingSRO Working Group MeetingSRO Working Group Meeting (Technical issues) |
| 12/21 | SRO Working Group Meeting |
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 **Top Activities/Concerns:**

1. **SRO Working Group –** The SRO Working Group has continued to meet to discuss the SRO program. The Working group meeting heard from a national expert on the school to prison pipeline and how reforms to the SRO program led to dramatic reductions in student arrests. The group also considered the reforms it would like to see and what adequate local law enforcement coverage would look like if there was no SRO program. Note that January 12, 2021 is a key date as both the Board of Education and the County Council will be considering the issue.

In anticipation of the January 12 meetings, Rob sent the below summary to the Executive Committee.

On January 12:

* The Board of Education will be receiving a report from the Superintendent and may consider modification or termination of the program.
* The County Council will be holding a public hearing on a bill from Councilmembers Jawando and Riemer on whether to terminate the SRO program and reinvest the savings in mental health services.

As we've discussed, [MCCPTA has a 2010 resolution](http://nebula.wsimg.com/ecdf250cd5091a67c24666ee731e3e66?AccessKeyId=AB71C8A62DC88BF7171E&disposition=0&alloworigin=1) on SROs that supports having at least one SRO to be assigned to every high school and provide support to middle and elementary schools as needed. I've summarized key facts below and end with some proposed immediate next steps.

General Background:

* After the killing of George Floyd there was a movement to remove police from schools. This movement has history but hadn't seen progress in ending SRO relationships until this summer.
* A number of jurisdictions quickly took action to suspend or terminate SRO programs (e.g., Oakland, Denver, Seattle and Minneapolis), but other large districts have decided to keep SRO programs albeit with some changes (e.g., Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and D.C.).
* The issue is being considered across Maryland school districts with no one taking bold action as of yet.  [This article from late Nov.](https://www.marylandmatters.org/2020/11/23/some-counties-push-to-remove-police-from-schools-but-who-has-the-authority-to-make-the-call/) provides a pretty good summary of the state of play.
* Note that the Safe to Learn of 2018 requires there to be a SRO assigned to each school or that there be adequate local law enforcement coverage. The law also requires certain data collection and the development of training.

MCPS / Working Group Background:

* In June 2020, the Montco Board resolved to have a data presentation in October and to consider modification or termination in January.
* In response to the Board action, MCPS established a working group to consider issues related to the SRO program.
* The working group is chaired by MCPS and representation from MCCPTA, NAACP, students, and law enforcement. The majority of working group participants are from MCPS or law enforcement. Rob Wilcox, a national expert on gun safety, has served on the committee as a representative of MCCPTA.
* The working group has had 6 meetings (monthly from August through November and with 2 meetings in December).  There were technical issues for the Dec. 15 meeting and Rob had a one on one makeup session with the working group chairs on Dec. 21.
* The working group has considered data related to student arrests, analyzed the memorandum of understanding between MCPS and law enforcement, heard from a national expert on best practices in other jurisdictions, made recommendations for improvement of the program, and discussed what would be "adequate local law enforcement coverage."

Relevant Data and MOU:

* Bethesda Beat article summarizing the Oct. 5 BoE meeting:  <https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/schools/high-school-principals-support-keeping-sros-school-district-says/>
* Presentation to the BoE on student arrest data:  [https://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BU5PS965F571/$file/Arrest%20Data%20SRO%20Work%20Group%20201005%20PPT.pdf](https://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BU5PS965F571/%24file/Arrest%20Data%20SRO%20Work%20Group%20201005%20PPT.pdf)
* Presentation to the BoE with data on student discipline:  [https://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BU5RST6EDD44/$file/Student%20Discipline%20201005%20PPT.pdf](https://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BU5RST6EDD44/%24file/Student%20Discipline%20201005%20PPT.pdf)
* I also attended a presentation from the Maryland Center on School Safety on the role of SROs that analyzed circumstances around arrests and found that 97% of the time the SRO is engaged by school administration or calls for service and not from their own insights -- which is similar to the data from Montco.
* Memorandum of Understanding between MCPS and law enforcement:  [https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/security-new/Executed%20SRO%20MOU.PDF.](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/security-new/Executed%20SRO%20MOU.PDF)
	+ Section II.C. and D has language on the selection and required training of SROs.
	+ See Section II.H, which lays information sharing obligations and delineated instances where LE shall take the lead in investigating and other instances where it may take the lead in investigating.
	+ Note that Section II.I has language about data gathering, analysis and review, but it seems like that was not regularly occurring or at least not being publicized in the decision making processes
* The Montgomery County Association of Administrators and Principals (MCAPP) submitted a letter in support of the SRO program.

Proposed Next Steps before January 12

* The working group has completed its work and there is no final report or recommendations. I expect that MCPS will propose modifications to the SRO program, including additional training, revisions to the MOU to clarify when it is appropriate for SROs to be involved, increased data collection and publication, and school community involvement in assessing the role of the SRO in that school.
* The working group/MCPS has invited us to testify at the Board meeting. I would not advise this as we have not considered the issue with the delegates.
* The DEI Committee is planning to submit testimony seeking to remove SRO's from campus.
* I would suggest that MCCPTA submit a list of questions to the Board that are consistent with our DEI principles and could elicit more information about the program, including:
	+ What data is available showing the benefit of SROs to school safety or student achievement?
	+ Is there additional data related to student arrests, including the circumstances leading to arrest, who initiated the arrest, steps taken prior to arrest to avoid arrest, fact patterns for each alleged offense, instances where charges were filed, and recidivism.
	+ What is the student perception of SROs in schools and how does an arrest affect the student body?
	+ When is it appropriate to arrest a student rather than attempt alternative interventions?
	+ What effect do SROs have on preventing or mitigating active shooter situations?
* I would also suggest we schedule a larger conversation among the delegates to get views from different schools on how MCCPTA should proceed.