



Massachusetts APPLESEED | Center for Law & Justice

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July 16, 2020

Representative Aaron Michlewitz, Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee
Representative Claire Cronin, Chair of the Joint Judiciary Committee
House Ways and Means and Judiciary Committees
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Massachusetts Appleseed letter in support of S2820, *An Act to Reform Police Standards and Shift Recourses to Build a More Equitable, Fair and Just Commonwealth that Values Black Lives and Communities of Color.*

Dear Chairman Michlewitz, Chairwoman Cronin, and Honorable Members of the House Ways and Means Committee and Joint Judiciary Committee:

The Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law & Justice (“Massachusetts Appleseed”) respectfully submits the following testimony in support of S2820 and requests that the House Ways and Means Committee and Joint Judiciary Committee ensure that school policing is addressed within this bill.

The mission of the Massachusetts Appleseed is to promote equal rights and opportunities for Massachusetts residents by developing and advocating for systemic solutions to social justice issues. Appleseed centers across the country work both collectively and independently to build a society in which opportunities are genuine, access to the law is universal and equal, and government advances the public interest. Central to this mission is ensuring that all residents of Massachusetts, especially young students, are provided a safe and supportive school environment. For years Massachusetts Appleseed has been working to bring an end to zero-tolerance school discipline policies, school arrests, and the school-to-prison pipeline.

Over-policing in Massachusetts schools disproportionately impacts Black and Latinx students, who are significantly more likely to be arrested at school than their white counterparts.¹ School Resource Officers (SROs) are meant to protect our students, but instead many SROs actively place our students in danger. For example, on December 3, 2018, a Springfield Massachusetts school resource officer assaulted a 14-year-old high school boy, grabbing him by the back of his neck and pushing him against the side of a school hallway. Subsequently, the officer filed a false incident report.² We cannot allow this type of behavior to go on any longer.

¹ Robin Dahlberg, *Arrested Futures: The Criminalization of School Discipline in Massachusetts’s Three Largest School Districts* (2012).

² Dan Gluan, “Springfield police officer Angel Marrero, videoed shoving high school student into wall, charged with assault, filing false report,” *MassLive*, May 31, 2019. <https://www.masslive.com/news/2019/05/springfield-police-officer-angel-marrero-videoed-shoving-high-school-student-into-wall-charged-with-assault-filing-false-report.html>

We have arrived at an unprecedented moment, when extensive police reform is within reach. Please ensure that the House's police reform accountability bill reforms current school policing practices by:

1. **Ending mandatory police placement in schools, and**
2. **Ensuring public accountability for what police do in schools.**

Our first priority is removing School Resource Officers from Massachusetts Schools. There is a simple legislative change you can enact that would achieve this goal, and keep schools safe. The definition of a "school resource officer" (SRO) in G.L. c. 71 § 37P(a) can be amended to include:

A school resource officer shall not be located on school grounds but at the local police station and shall be charged with serving as the primary responder to calls from public schools.

In addition, Massachusetts Appleseed would like to highlight elements of S2820 that we strongly support:

- Senator Boncore's **Amendment 25 "Training and Certification for School Resource Officers"** requires specific training for SROs on a host of important topics, to be developed in consultation with experts, and to be required before an officer can be assigned as an SRO.
- Senator Jehlen's **Amendment 80 "School Committee Approval of SROs and Data Reporting"** puts school committees – not superintendents and police chiefs - in charge of annually approving school policing by vote, and requires that the district and police department comply with the reporting requirements of school-based arrests to qualify to have an SRO.
- Senator Jehlen's **Amendment 108 "Protecting Students from Profiling"** strengthens existing provisions of S2820 on information sharing by prohibiting Massachusetts school staff and school police from sharing student information to the Boston Regional Intelligence Center, the FBI, ICE, and other gang databases.
- **Section 59-61 of S2820 (initially filed by Representatives Decker and Khan in H.1386) "Expanding Expungement Eligibility"** allows multiple cases on a juvenile's record to be considered for expungement – rather than only one, which is current Massachusetts law – and reduces the list of offenses never eligible for expungement.

These measures represent an essential step in dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline and supporting the grassroots movements led by young people in Boston, Springfield, Worcester, Framingham and across the Commonwealth who are advocating for their own safety. **Now is the time to listen to our young people. Massachusetts Appleseed strongly urges you to end mandatory police placement in schools, and ensure public accountability for what police do in schools.**

Respectfully submitted,



Deborah M. Silva,
Executive Director
Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law & Justice