



*An Initiative of Minnesota Alliance With Youth*

Dear Senator Dibble, Senator Kent, Ms. Hulden, Ms. Montgomery, and Ms. Pentek,

Thank you for sharing, presenting, and testifying on Senate File 1674 at the Minnesota Youth Council Committee hearing on Friday, April 26, 2019. First and foremost, we would like to thank you for taking the time to share this bill with us hear young people's voices. Youth across Minnesota are widely impacted by SROs, so inculcating youth opinion on legislation pertaining to this issue is important.

We believe that the bill will begin to pave the way for significant structural reforms regarding School Resource Officers. The bill's statewide implementation fits the goal of the MYCC and is in line with what the youth of Minnesota want prioritized: school safety. We believe that the increased education for SROs will create a less contentious relationship between the SROs and students who they serve. As such, we believe it will help alleviate the impacts of the school-to-prison pipeline. Finally, we believe that reporting SRO behavior to the administrators and eventually the Department of Education will allow for more transparency in regards to current policing in the education system.

While we believe that this bill is the first step in the right direction, we have a few reservations. Although the bill mentions training for SROs, it fails to address specific training to help alleviate problems with discriminatory enforcement. Large cultural barriers exist between students of color and the police, so building a positive student-SRO relationship is necessary. Additionally, ensuring that other marginalized communities of students (such as those with disabilities or those who identify as LGBTQ+) are treated equally by SROs is important to ensuring a safe learning environment for all, and the bill lacks specific funding to protect such communities.

In addition, the bill also fails to consider the financial burdens placed on school districts for school administrator training, which would circumvent funds potentially used for extracurriculars and other student enrichment programs. Schools are often strained for resources, so stretching their resources even more would result in worse SRO training and lesser funding for other programs.

Here are further suggestions from the MYC as it pertains to SF 1674:

- Students need to be represented in the conversations and trainings regarding SROs and administrators in their district
- Though the bill is trying to reform the system in which SROs operate, it fails to include students of color, disabled
- Reports should include any and all interactions students have with SROs and could be used for future reference regarding increased tensions between SROs and whether they've helped or harmed students in school environments
- Personal testimony by Ms. Montgomery to highlight the realities of lack of uniformity in the system and emphasized the need to address problems uniquely faced by different subsets of the student population.
- Keep in mind the differences between greater and metro Minnesota
- It is crucial this legislation does not perpetuate the school to prison pipeline

Thank you for your time and efforts. Please be in touch with any questions on SF 1674.

Sincerely,

Minnesota Youth Council