What the Research Shows: The Impact of School Resource Officers (SROs)
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<u>SROs Are Not Effective in Improving School Safety, Discipline or Climate</u>

- **SROs do not improve school safety or reduce school violence.** There is no clear evidence that the use of school resource officers (SROs) or guards in schools is effective in preventing school violence.[i] A review of 40 years of evaluations of school policing showed no positive impact on school safety outcomes.[ii]

- **Students feel less safe, and more fearful, at schools with SROs.** Research shows that school security measures (including SROs) generally increases students' fear and negatively impacts students' perceptions of safety.[iii]

- **The presence of SROs leads to more expulsions and suspensions – particularly for Black students.** Studies show that schools with SROs also rely more heavily on exclusionary discipline.[iv] Schools with high security (including police presence) have significantly more suspensions, and a greater black-white disparity in suspensions.[v]

- **Schools with SROs criminalize and arrest youth for minor misbehavior.** When SROs or security are present in schools, trivial forms of student misconduct are more likely to result in arrest and court referral.[vi] Most secondary school administrators say their SROs are involved in school discipline, even in situations where no crime was committed.[vii]

<u>Black and Brown Students Experience Disproportionate Harm and Trauma from School Police</u>

- **Black and Brown students feel less safe at schools with SROs.** Students of color – especially Black students – are less likely to say they feel safer with police in their school.[viii]

- **Police encounters trigger stress, fear, trauma, and anxiety for Black and Brown youth, which harm mental health and erode educational performance.** The health consequences of police contact are even greater when youth believe they are being stopped or targeted due to their race or ethnicity. One study found that extensive low-level police contact significantly reduced test scores for African-American teenage boys, perpetuating racial inequalities in educational outcomes.[ix]

- **An SRO's presence can cause anxiety and fear for Black and Brown youth who live in overpoliced neighborhoods.** For youth who live in neighborhoods with a higher rate of invasive police stops, seeing police officers may trigger general anxiety and fear.[x] Young men of color experience higher anxiety with frequent police contacts, with anxiety symptoms significantly related to the number of times they were stopped and to how they perceived the encounter was conducted.[xi]

- **Arrests at Chicago Public Schools (CPS) disproportionately target Black male youth, often for subjective reasons like perceived disobedience or defiance.** School-based arrest rates at CPS were twice as high among African American boys as for the district as whole. Most arrests were the result of peer conflicts or conflicts between students and teachers, based on perceived disobedience or defiance – not for criminal infractions like substances or weapons possession.[xii]

<u>What Works? Relationship Building, Restorative Justice, Mental Health Services, and Social-Emotional Development</u>

- **When schools focus on social-emotional development, arrests go down and student outcomes improve.** A February 2020 study of CPS high schools found that schools that focused on enhancing social well-being and promoting hard work enhanced students' self-reported social-emotional development, resulting in fewer school-based arrests and better long-run educational attainment for students from those schools.[xiii]

- **Schools with strong positive climates, including strong relationships among students, parents, and teachers, have fewer arrests or disciplinary problems.** Research shows that school climate – including the degree to which students and parents feel supported by teachers and staff – shapes school safety.[xiv] One study found that improved student-teacher relationships meant students were less likely to get in trouble and had higher academic achievement, even controlling for factors like earlier problems and sociodemographic background.[xv] In CPS, schools with stronger relationships among students, parents, and teachers saw improved safety, and were able to resolve conflicts, regardless of factors like neighborhood crime.[xvi]

- **School-based mental health providers improve school climate and safety.** School mental health services – provided by counselors, social workers, nurses, and psychologists – are demonstrated to improve behavior and school climate, and reduce disciplinary referrals.[xvii]

- **Restorative justice programs are demonstrated to decrease violence and disciplinary issues at CPS.** One report found that CPS schools that consistently implemented restorative justice programs saw a decrease in violence and disciplinary issues, along with improved school culture and performance – similar to results from schools across the country.[xviii]

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[i] See, e.g., Tanner-Smith, E. E., Fisher, B. W., Addington, L. A., & Gardella, J. H. (2018). *Adding security, but subtracting safety? Exploring schools' use of multiple visible security measures.* American Journal of Criminal Justice, 43, 102–119; Addington, L. A. (2009). *Cops and cameras: Public school security as a policy response to Columbine*. American Behavioral Scientist, 52, 1424–1446; Phaneuf, S. W. (2009). *Security in schools: Its effect on students*. El Paso, TX: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC.

[ii] Stern and Petrosino, *What Do We Know About the Effects of School Based Law Enforcement on School Safety*, West Ed Justice and Prevention Research Center, April 2019, https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/JPRC-Police-Schools-Brief.pdf.

[iii] Bachman, R., Randolph, A., & Brown, B. L. (2011). *Predicting perceptions of fear at school and going to and from school for African American and White students: The effects of school security measures.* Youth & Society, 43, 705–726; Perumean-Chaney, S. E., & Sutton, L. M. (2013). *Students and perceived school safety: The impact of school security measures.* American Journal of Criminal Justice, 38, 570–588.

iv *Why and When Do School Resource Officers Engage in School Discipline? The Role of Context in Shaping Disciplinary Involvement.* American Journal of Education 126 (November 2019), the University of Chicago; 0195-6744/2019/12601-0002 (page 37).

v Finn, J.D. & Servoss, T.J. (2014). *Misbehavior, suspensions, and security measures in high school: Racial/ethnic and gender differences.* Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk, 5 (2), Article 11, https://digitalcommons.library.tmc.edu/childrenatrisk/vol5/iss2/11.

vi Hirschfield, P. J. (2008). *Preparing for prison? The criminalization of school discipline in the USA.* Theoretical Criminology, 12, 79–101.

vii *Why and When Do School Resource Officers Engage in School Discipline? The Role of Context in Shaping Disciplinary Involvement.* American Journal of Education 126 (November 2019), the University of Chicago; 0195-6744/2019/12601-0002 (page 36).

viii Nakamoto, J., Cerna, R., and Stern, A. *High School Students' Perceptions of Police Vary by Student Race and Ethnicity : Findings from an analysis of the California Healthy Kids Survey,* 2017/18. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.. https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/resource-high-school-students-perceptions-of-police.pdf; Perumean-Chaney, S. E., & Sutton, L. M. (2013). *Students and perceived school safety: The impact of school security measures.* American Journal of Criminal Justice, 38, 570–588.

ix Legewie, J. and Fagan, J. *Aggressive Policing and the Educational Performance of Minority Youth.* American Sociological Review (2019).

x Sewell, Abigail A. and Kevin A. Jefferson. 2016. *Collateral Damage: The Health Effects of Invasive Police Encounters in New York City.* Journal of Urban Health 93(1):42–67.

xi Geller, A., Fagan, J, Tyler, T., Link, BG. *Aggressive Policing and the mental health of young urban men.* Am J Public Health. (2014);104:2321–2327.

xii U Chicago CCSR Research Report: Discipline Practices in Chicago Public Schools - CPS Discipline Report.

xiii Jackson, C.K., Porter, S.C., Easton, J.Q., Blanchard, A., Kiguel, S., *School Effects on Socio-emotional Development, School-Based Arrests, and Educational Attainment*, CALDER Working Paper No. 226-0220 (February 2020).

xiv Steinberg, M.P., Allensworth, E., Johnson, D.W. *Student and Teacher Safety in Chicago Public Schools: The Roles of Community Context and School Social Organization.* Consortium on Chicago School Research Report (May 2011).

xv Crosnoe, R., Johnson, M.K., Elder, G., *Intergenerational Bonding in School: The Behavioral and Contextual Correlates of Student-Teacher Relationships*. Sociology of Education (2004).

xvi Steinberg, M.P., Allensworth, E., Johnson, D.W. *Student and Teacher Safety in Chicago Public Schools: The Roles of Community Context and School Social Organization.* Consortium on Chicago School Research Report (May 2011); Stevens, W.D. *et al*; *Discipline Practices in Chicago Schools: Trends in the Use of Suspensions and Arrests*, Consortium on Chicago School Research Report (March 2015).

xvii National Association of School Psychologists, *Rethinking School Safety: Communities and Schools Working Together* (2013); ACLU, Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff is Harming Students (2019).

xviii High HOPES Campaign, *From Policy to Standard Practice: Restorative Justice in Chicago Public Schools* (Fall 2011).