#NOCOPSNOGUNS
POLICE ARE NOT THE ANSWER TO SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

The Expansion of School Policing after Columbine

Police presence in schools expanded after the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, when two seniors at Columbine High School killed 13 people and injured 24 others. Short-sighted policy makers enacted laws that increased the criminalization of students and called for greater police presence within schools, spending over $750 million in federal funds to hire more than 6,500 school police officers.

A subsequent shooting in Newtown, Connecticut received a similar response to that of Columbine. Politicians proposed addressing school safety by: having an armed officer at every school; increasing law enforcement's role within schools; deploying the National Guard; and even arming teachers.

Now, the Parkland shooting has renewed calls to place more police and more guns in schools, both of which are ineffective at making schools safe and particularly harmful to students of color who are routinely targeted and profiled. At best, proposals to increase investment in the law enforcement infrastructure in schools represent a misunderstanding of what makes schools safe. At worst, these proposals are an excuse to increase the criminalization and targeting of Black and Brown students and communities.

The Real Result of Police in Schools

Placing more police in schools has harmful, unintended consequences for students:

- School-based police often respond to typical adolescent behavior that does not threaten the safety of others. As a result, arrests rates for low-level offenses substantially increase when police are assigned to schools. In Pennsylvania, many school-based referrals to law enforcement result in citations for minor offenses like disorderly conduct or harassment. Of the 45 school arrests that occur each day in Florida, two-thirds are for misdemeanors.

- Students of color are disproportionately arrested and referred to law enforcement while attending school. Although there is no evidence that students of color misbehave at higher rates, Black students were more than twice as likely as their white peers to be referred to law enforcement or arrested at school. Black girls are especially targeted by school police, representing 43% of girls arrested at school, yet constituting only 17% of the public school enrollment.

- Rather than making students feel safer, placing police in schools often creates a hostile environment for students and worsens relationships between students and educators. With more metal detectors, surveillance cameras, pat-downs, drug-sniffing dogs, tasers, and other security measures, students feel alienated and distrustful others.

Creating Schools that are Safe for All Students

Research and the experiences of students across the country tells us that relationships between students, parents, and staff are more important in making a school safe than increased security measures. Instead of more police, schools need to implement strategies that create positive, supportive learning environments that phase out law enforcement, not increase their presence.

INVEST IN REAL SOLUTIONS – DIVEST FROM SCHOOL POLICING

Divestment from School Police Officers

An improvement in mental health resources in U.S. cities cannot happen without an intentional and accountable effort to divest funding and shift budgeting from School Police officers to other necessary programs that actually promote a nurturing school environment. The expansion of police presence and security personnel/equipment in schools must end, as it only promotes a culture of fear rather than reinforcing the creativity and voice of students.

Comprehensive Mental and Emotional Health Services

We want all schools in Philadelphia to provide comprehensive mental health services so students can be proactively and consistently supported when dealing with emotional, mental and social concerns.

More Guidance Counselors and Social Workers

In order to address the violence affecting our schools, the School District of Philadelphia must prioritize hiring more guidance counselors and social workers who are specifically trained to support the emotional and mental state of students and to encourage the development of youth.

Expansion of Restorative Justice Practices

Restorative justice is an effective way to build positive relationships between students, parents, teachers, school staff and community. It is an alternative to the presence of police and armed teachers that promotes emotional intelligence and communication – both of which are skills necessary for a thriving adulthood. Our schools require an intentional and systematic effort to implement restorative justice programs that incorporate peer-to-peer and peer-to-teacher/administrator mediation.

Protection for Students and Families from ICE Arrests around Schools

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Gun Control that does Not Result in Targeted Policing of Black and Brown Bodies

Enact legislation that restricts the access of assault rifles without thorough screenings for mental and/or emotional, criminal, or social concerns. Additionally, enforcement of laws that restrict access to guns must not be racially-coded as to favor any particular group.