



Legislative Testimony  
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**Written Testimony Opposing  
House Bill 7356, An Act Concerning School Security**

Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is David McGuire, and I am executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in opposition to House Bill 7356, An Act Concerning School Security.

The ACLU-CT believes that school environments should be conducive to learning and that schools should be places that are safe for our children. We therefore oppose this bill, which would create a task force to study the arming of school security officers in schools and allow schools to use school security infrastructure competitive grant funds to hire school security officers.

Arming security officers increases the likelihood that students, not intruders, will be the ones harmed by those weapons. We already witness issues with police using unnecessary force against students in schools. Students have been tased and physically attacked by officers in their schools, the places in which they are supposed to be protected and educated. Placing firearms in schools would only lead to additional instances of students being hurt by police.

Increasing the presence of police in schools would lead to more negative interactions between police and students and more arrests of students. In fact, there are 3.5 times more arrests in schools with police than those without them. Despite the fact that the majority of mass shooters are white males, more police in schools would lead to more arrests of minority students. More students of color and students of vulnerable populations are arrested than other students, so increasing security officers in our schools would disproportionately negatively affect these students. In Connecticut schools, Black female students are already six times more likely than white female students to be arrested, Latino students are more than twice as likely to be arrested as white students, and disabled students are more than six times as likely to be arrested as non-disabled students. These disparities would only increase with more police in our schools.

In addition to being safe physically, it is important for students to have trusting relationships with the adults in their schools. Arming officers in schools, however, would create an environment of intimidation that would cause students to fear resource officers and police in general.

A 2019 national ACLU report found that, rather than more police, schools need more support staff for students. Our children are experiencing more depression, anxiety, and trauma. What they need most is more interaction with counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses, not more contact with police, and particularly not armed police. With a ratio of 326 students to one counselor in Connecticut schools, we are far from the recommended ratio of 250 students to one counselor. Providing resources for students' mental wellbeing would do far more to prevent violence in our schools than adding more police to our schools and giving them guns.

Placing more security officers in Connecticut schools and arming them is not the way to keep our students safe, and the state should not use its resources to do so. We strongly encourage the committee to oppose House Bill 7356.