

UNFAVORABLE
Senate Bill 819
Public Schools – School Resource Officers – Firearms Required

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 28, 2024

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The Maryland State Education Association strongly opposes Senate Bill 819. Senate Bill 819 requires a Baltimore City school police officer and a school resource officer to carry a firearm while present on school premises.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA believes it is of the utmost importance that students learn in a safe and healthy environment. Policymakers, communities, families, and educators must do all we can to prevent gun violence from wreaking havoc in our communities and our public schools. MSEA supports legislation that provides access to fully paid emergency response training for educators and legislation that provides access to mental health resources and counseling services for students and educators.

However, our union firmly believes that requiring school resource officers or school security employees to carry firearms as a preventative measure against armed intruders creates an unsafe environment, placing students and personnel at greater risk. National research confirms that the use of school resource officers does not reduce school shootings or gun related incidents.¹

¹ Sorensen, Lucy C., Montserrat Avila Acosta, John Engberg, and Shawn D. Bushway. (2021). The Thin Blue Line in Schools: New Evidence on School-Based Policing Across the U.S..



Policymakers must do all they can to enact proactive, common-sense gun safety laws to keep our communities and students safe. Last session, the General Assembly passed Jaelynn's Law, which is designed to bolster safe storage requirements for guns and limit access to firearms by minors. MSEA greatly appreciates legislators pursuing proactive gun safety policies, such as Jaelynn's Law, that will keep our communities and students safe.

Finally, MSEA believes continued public investment and implementation of expanded access to mental and behavioral health services for students is a much more effective approach to ensure the safety of students, rather than expanding the presence of guns on school premises. For these reasons, we oppose Senate Bill 819.

We urge the committee to issue an Unfavorable Report on Senate Bill 819.