



State of Connecticut
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March 1, 2010

Testimony of Rep. Jason Rojas
HB 5318: AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Representative Fleischmann, Senator Gaffey and members of the Education Committee thank you for raising HB 5318 An Act Concerning School Resources Officers. I introduced this legislation last session with the support of the Connecticut School Resource Officers Association and the legislation passed the House 142-1 but was not called in the Senate. The goal of this proposal is to assist School Resource Officers in promoting school safety while protecting children's educational opportunities.

This proposal would seek to accomplish the following:

1. It would use existing resources to provide proper training and support to school resource officers, full-time police officers who are stationed in schools.
2. It would require the creation of formal written agreements detailing the roles and responsibilities of school resource officers.
3. By acting as counselors, instructors, and law enforcement officers, properly trained and supported school resource officers ensure that children are arrested only when necessary and protect the safety of Connecticut schoolchildren.

I would like to provide reasons I hope you will consider deciding to move this legislation forward:

1. School-based arrests, the vast majority of which are for non-violent offenses, have little impact in changing the behaviors that led to the arrest
2. Very young children are being arrested at school, including children younger than third grade

3. Students of color are significantly more likely to be arrested at school than other students for similar offenses
4. School resource officers need training and support to effectively promote school safety.
6. Unlike other specialized police positions, school resource officers often receive little or no dedicated training.
7. Furthermore, the responsibilities of school resource officers within the school are rarely clearly delineated, leading to confusion about their roles in the schools where they are stationed.
8. With proper training, school resource officers will be better equipped to de-escalate potentially explosive situations.
9. Arresting children at school harms children and communities.
10. Keeping children in school is crucial to improving their long-term opportunities.
11. When school resource officers have effective tools and choices other than arrest, they can help divert children from the juvenile justice system.
12. Most juvenile justice-involved children never graduate from high school and arrested children are more likely to offend again. Throughout their lives, these children may continue to face barriers stemming from school-based arrests, including denials of student loans, public housing, employment or occupational licenses.

Thank you for your consideration. Below is a copy of the substitute language for HB-5318.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE FOR PROPOSED HB 5318 (2010)

Section 10-220 of the general statutes shall be amended to include:

School Resource Officers. Policy. Training.

(a) Each local and regional board of education that assigns a school resource officer to any public school shall create a written memorandum of understanding or other formal written agreement with the employing police department establishing: (1) the objectives of the school resource officer program; (2) the rules that will govern the school resource officer program's operation; and (3) the roles and responsibilities of school resource officers, including their roles and responsibilities as educators, counselors and law enforcement officers. Within thirty (30) days of the beginning of the school term, each local and regional board of education shall submit the agreement developed pursuant to this section to the Connecticut Department of Education.

(b) Within available appropriations, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families and the Court Support Services Division of the Connecticut Judicial Department, in collaboration with the Connecticut School Resource Officer Association, shall create and offer to all school districts, at no charge, a safe schools training course which includes, but is not limited to training on: (1) the role and responsibility of school resource officers, (2) relevant state and federal laws, (3) security awareness in the school environment, (4) counseling, mediation and conflict resolution, (5) disaster and emergency response, (6) de-escalation of student behavior, including, but not limited to students with behavioral health and special education needs, (7) child and adolescent psychology and development, and (8) cultural competence.

(c) After the implementation of the safe schools training course pursuant to this section, no local or regional board of education shall assign a school resource officer to a public school unless that individual first completes the safe schools training course. A person who is assigned to a public school as a school resource officer prior to the effective date of this act shall be required to complete the safe schools training course within 180 days of the implementation of the safe schools training course. This requirement may also be fulfilled through completion of a school resource officer training course that includes training on the subjects in subsection (b) and is certified by the State Police Officer Standards and Training Council or the National Association of School Resource Officers.

(d) Nothing in subsections (a) to (c), inclusive, of this section shall preclude a local or regional board of education from adopting policies and procedures pursuant to this section which exceed the requirements of said subsections.

(e) As used in this section, "school resource officer" means a police officer or any member of a law enforcement unit, as defined under section 7-294a, who has been assigned to a school in accordance with an agreement between the chief of the appropriate law enforcement agency and the local or regional board of education.