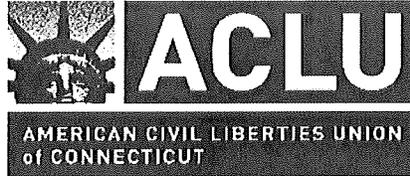


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April 5, 2013

Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 6682, An Act Concerning Collaboration Between Boards of Education and Law Enforcement Personnel

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Sandra Staub, legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut. I am here to testify in favor of House Bill 6682, An Act Concerning Collaboration Between Boards of Education and Law Enforcement Personnel. The ACLU of Connecticut fully supports this bill as a necessary step toward juvenile justice.

In our 2008 report, *Hard Lessons: School Resource Officer Programs and School-Based Arrests in Three Connecticut Towns*, we documented the troubling correlation between the deployment of School Resource Officers and the increase in arrests of students in schools. In our study, we showed that not only did the rate of arrest for students increase with presence of School Resource Officers, but also that the rate of arrest for students of color was alarmingly higher than the rate of arrest for white students. Citing research showing that arresting juveniles increases the likelihood that they will commit future offenses, and also increases the likelihood that they will be arrested as adults, our report demonstrated that the unregulated presence of School Resource Officers in schools helped to create what is known as the school-to-prison pipeline with its disproportionate and negative impact on students of color.

Our report included recommendations for reversing these disturbing trends, including the following:

- Every SRO program should have in place formal written policies describing the objectives of the program and the rules that will govern its operation. These policies should be publicly available.
- Where school districts and local police departments operate SRO programs in partnership, they should have in place publicly available Memoranda of Understanding or other formal agreements clearly establishing their mutual duties.
- Each school district should annually assess the success of its SRO program, with particular attention to the rate and nature of school-based arrests, and publish the results of that assessment.

In sum, our 2008 report found that it is critical to establish clear and well-considered written Memoranda of Understanding between schools and law enforcement agencies, and to collect relevant data, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of School Resource Officer training and policy. Reports of the data collected should be generated, reviewed, and made publicly available. All of this should be laid out in the written memorandum.

Since our 2008 report, other organizations have documented not only that students of color continue to be targeted for arrest disproportionately (Voices for Children) but also that a Memorandum of Understanding between the school district and the relevant law enforcement agency will help reduce the rate of arrest of students and the disproportionate impact on students of color (Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance).

House Bill 6682 mandates the adoption and implementation of such a Memorandum of Understanding, and the collection, analysis and reporting of data on the incidence of arrests in schools, including data “disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, age, whether the student is a recipient of special education services, whether the student's primary language is English, and the offenses for which the school-based arrests were made”. The mandate and the data are both welcome and necessary steps toward juvenile justice in Connecticut.