

**TESTIMONY OF ERICA E. BROMLEY, MSW**  
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Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Task Force's Subcommittee on School Safety, my name is Erica Bromley. I am the Director of the Manchester Youth Service Bureau and Vice President of the CT Youth Services Association. Connecticut is home to 102 Youth Service Bureaus serving 145 communities across the state. Youth Service Bureaus are mandated by State Statute to be the coordinating unit of community-based services to provide comprehensive delivery of prevention, intervention, treatment and follow-up services.

I am here today to focus on the discussion around school safety as it relates to the presence of police officers stationed in schools. Many schools throughout CT already have police in their schools, and many more are sure to join them in the near future. The role of those police officers varies from school to school and from district to district. Data shows that across our nation, the number of school based arrests has grown because of the presence of police officers stationed in schools. Most arrests tend to be for minor offenses and behaviors that would not result in arrest in a school without police presence. Research also shows that this growing trend of in-school arrests is not necessarily caused by worsening behavior by students, but rather by a change in the ways adults respond to behaviors, largely due to policies that promote suspension, expulsion, and arrest, too often for minor or non-criminal behaviors.

As a community with School Resource Officers stationed in our High School, Middle School and Alternative Schools, Manchester saw firsthand what could happen. In 2010, Manchester High School was ranked in the top five of highest school based arrest rates in the state based on student population. Our community decided to look at this data and bring together a variety of stakeholders to address this, as well as to address exclusionary discipline rates and availability of intervention services. The Chief of Police and Superintendent signed a Memorandum of Agreement to work together at improving these numbers and the Manchester Agencies, Police and Schools Collaborative (known as MAPS) was created. After many months of planning, creating new guidelines and policies, creating a new graduated response model, adding more intervention options, offering additional training, and more, we implemented a new District wide process. After the first full school year of implementation in 2011-12, our arrest rate decreased by 78% at Manchester High School and Expulsions decreased by 69%.

What I bring to the table is firsthand knowledge of the importance of collaboration as it relates to police stationed in schools. That collaboration starts with a Memorandum of Agreement and involves a community approach to school safety, progressive discipline, and a clear graduated response model that applies to teachers, administrators and police officers. Behaviors can and

should be addressed early and by the right people. Manchester has proven the effectiveness of this concept and the importance is paramount in our current climate. Every school district and police department who have police stationed in schools should be required to sign a MOA to help outline roles and responsibilities.

Before I conclude, I would also like to make you aware that the CT Youth Services Association is currently in the process of collecting information from member YSBs on the services they provide and more specifically, the role of YSBs in community and/or school crisis situations. We believe it is important to recognize the breadth of services that YSBs provide and the amount of expertise that we possess. We are eager to share the results of our survey and reinforce our ability to act as a valuable tool as your task force moves forward in addressing the issues related to school safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today and for your willingness to address the issues before us. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.