

HD 124, AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE LOCATION OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Sponsor: Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, 1st Hampshire District

All parents, students, and teachers want schools to be safe, but research continually raises doubts that placing police in schools is an effective public safety intervention. In 2020, the Legislature eliminated the requirement that all school districts be assigned at least one school resource officer (SRO), enabling local control on these decisions.

HD 124, An Act Relative to the Location of School Resource Officers would:

- o Require that SROs serving school districts be located at the nearest police station instead of stationed in schools;
- o Task SROs, [who are specifically trained and certified by the POST](#), as the primary responders to school-based emergencies.

Our state has invested millions in school-based policing with little evidence of its effectiveness but plenty of [evidence of its harms](#), leading the *Globe* to call school policing a "[cop out](#)".

- o Arrest rates and suspension rates increase, and graduation and college enrollment rates decrease, while police are placed in schools, [particularly for Black male students](#).
- o Being stopped at school by police officers is a "[potent](#)" [predictor of heightened emotional distress](#) and post-traumatic stress symptoms in youth, and the presence of guards and metal detectors in schools significantly increased students' perceptions of fear.
- o A [meta-analysis](#) of school-based practices to reduce firearm violence found that "hardening of schools seems to be a questionable endeavor for schools, given the dearth of evidence regarding effectiveness".

Massachusetts school districts are already moving away from school-based policing.

[Worcester](#) has removed its SROs from school buildings, designating "school liaison officers" to respond as needed to schools. [Somerville](#) is poised to do the same. Students and parents across the state are urging their own schools to follow suit.

Relocating SROs to police stations enables them to respond to schools emergencies without having to address school discipline matters.

Police are not school disciplinarians. Nor are their tools (e.g., arrest, court referral) appropriate responses to routine school misbehavior. Nonetheless, SROs often become schools' default disciplinarians, [undermining the effectiveness of their role](#). Districts like [Bridgeport](#), CT, reduced their school-based arrests, particularly for more minor incidents, after relocating SROs from school grounds.

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