



# School Policing in Massachusetts

## NAACP New Bedford Branch

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# What's in the Old Law (M.G.L. c. 71. s. 37P)

- ▶ Each chief of police must assign at least one SRO to every district, subject to appropriation
- ▶ The district superintendent may petition the MA Department of Education (DESE) for a waiver of this requirement
- ▶ Schools and police must update their memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to clarify:
  - ▶ SROs won't be hired based solely on seniority, but based on training in de-escalation and conflict resolution
  - ▶ SRO program will be reviewed annually
  - ▶ That police powers cannot be used to address discipline
  - ▶ That police and schools will annually share arrest/referral data with DESE

# How Well Were We Following that Law?

- ▶ The Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board, created to monitor implementation of the Criminal Justice Reform Act of 2018, found:
  - ▶ Many jurisdictions had failed to update their MOUs
  - ▶ Many do not know who's job it is to collect/report data
- ▶ Springfield, Worcester, Lowell, and other large districts with a history of relying on school police reported 0 school-based arrests to DESE in 2018-19.
- ▶ Advocates filed public records requests to learn more.



# Data Review

- ▶ Only 31 of 289 school districts reported any school-based arrests in 2018-19, the first year such data was collected.
- ▶ Even among those 31 districts, too few schools reported any school-based arrests.

# Some Results of Public Records Request

## Data reported to DESE

- ▶ Boston: 4
- ▶ Springfield: 0
- ▶ Worcester: 0

## Data collected by advocates

- ▶ Boston: 114 (reported to Globe)
- ▶ Springfield 41 (75 reported to WBUR)
- ▶ Worcester > 4



# How About New Bedford?

New Bedford Police Department responded through an attorney for the New Bedford Public Schools that the Police Department “does not collect arrest data.”



Summer 2020: Protest & Police Reform in the Statehouse

# What's in the New Law?

- ▶ Superintendents, not police chiefs, must decide if they want police in schools
- ▶ Superintendents must provide:
  - ▶ the cost of SROs
  - ▶ the budget for mental/social/ emotional health supports
  - ▶ Data on school-based arrests & referrals to law enforcement
- ▶ New Model MOU Commission to create a new Model MOU



# What's Next?

## ▶ In the Statehouse

- ▶ Push for new legislative changes for police-free schooling in MA
- ▶ Engage the Model MOU Commission to limit reliance on police to address school matters

## ▶ In Our Communities

- ▶ Get the data on school-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement
- ▶ Get the data on how much school policing costs, and how much the district is spending on counselors.
- ▶ Investigate best practices to keep schools safe...

# What could we do instead of place police in schools?

1. Station police at police stations, where they can be called for emergencies, like Milwaukee and Bridgeport, CT.
2. Increase school safety with:
  1. Comprehensive safety/crisis plans with parent, student, and community input, like Advancement Project
  2. Peacekeepers with ties to the school, students, and community, like Oakland
  3. Providing social/emotional/mental health supports, like Denver
3. Use culturally responsive models for truly strengthening trust and communication between students and schools, like Californians for Justice's Relationship Centered Schools.