Fact Sheet on School Policing Bills
Coalition for Smart Responses to Student Behavior

All parents, students, and educators want schools to be safe, but there are increasing doubts that placing police in schools makes them so. Last year, Massachusetts stopped requiring that all school districts be assigned at least one school resource officer (SRO). These bills provide school districts other models for keeping students safe:

- **S.286 (Chandler)/H.648 (Khan), An Act Relative to Safer Schools** – which limits the use of police powers in school, collects more data on student/police interactions, requires public reporting of that data to have SROs, and creates a grant program for schools seeking to implement safety practices that do not rely on school-based policing.
- **H.694, An Act Relative to the Location of School Resource Officers (Sabadosa)** – which removes SROs from schools, locates them at the nearest police station, and tasks them with responding to school-based emergencies.

Placing police in schools often devolves into police serving as school disciplinarians. Such reliance does not make schools safer, but does increase court involvement for youth, damaging students’ educational futures in the process. Meanwhile, our state’s ratio of students to counselors, 304:1, fails to meet the nationally recommended ratio (250:1).

The state reports that schools and police are not complying with reforms. Many cities did not adopt the policing agreements required by the Criminal Justice Reform Act (CJRA). Fewer still report data required by law: Boston, Springfield, Worcester, and Lowell reported 4 school-based arrests between them in 2019, 110 fewer than Boston had alone.

Across the state and country, schools are using better ways to keep students safe:

- **Worcester** has removed its SROs from school buildings for the rest of the year, and its City Council has given approval to end the program entirely.
- **Somerville** has suspended its SRO program.
- **Northampton** eliminated its SRO program after reducing its police budget.
- **Oakland**, CA, hired “peacekeepers” with ties to the students and community, instead of police, to help with arrival, dismissal, and transitions in the school day.
- **Denver**, CO, is using funds saved from ending its police contract to provide greater social/emotional/mental health supports to students.

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