



To: Urbana Unit 116 School Board
From: NAACP Champaign County Branch and Champaign County ACLU
August 27, 2020

Dear Members of the Urbana Unit 116 School Board,

On behalf of our combined membership, Champaign County ACLU and NAACP Champaign County Branch are writing you to express our opposition to the use of Urbana police officers (SROs) in Urbana schools.

We understand that District 116 is currently facing daunting challenges due to the coronavirus and we deeply appreciate the commitment of board members, staff, and teachers to the education of Urbana's children and youth during this difficult period. Urbana is also examining how best to rethink public safety and policing. This revisioning should apply to police within schools as well as without.

On November 20, 2018, Unit 116 passed a resolution committing to racial equity. The district resolved to review its "policies, procedures, and structures through an equity lens." It is important to bring this "equity lens" to bear on the use of SROs. Are armed officers reducing the troubling disparities in educational outcomes between white and Black students in Urbana's schools? We see no evidence they are. Although Black students are about 37% of the Urbana High student body, they make up between 60 and 80% of suspensions

Research across the country has shown that schools are not made safer from attack or crime because of the presence of SROs. The triad model used in Urbana schools specifies that student resource officers are supposed to serve as teachers and counselors as well as law enforcement, a mission that blurs their roles and makes it difficult to ensure that students' civil rights are protected or to enact oversight.

As you, the Board members, analyze the budget, we urge you to re-allocate the resources from SROs to counselors, nurses, and other professionals who have better training and more expertise in supporting marginalized students, and who do not, inadvertently or otherwise, send students of color the message that there is a school-to-prison pipeline in place to entrap them.

Sincerely,
Minnie Pearson
NAACP, Champaign County Branch
Carol Leff
Champaign County ACLU