

Fact Sheet: The Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act

Senator Chris Murphy, Rep. Ayanna Pressley, Senator Elizabeth Warren, and Rep. Ilhan Omar, introduced the Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act. The purpose of this legislation is to decrease the number of arrests in schools and help schools hire more counselors, social workers, nurses, and other health professionals.

The Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act would:

- **Prohibit the use of federal funds for maintaining police in schools.**
Since 1999, the federal government has spent more than \$1 billion to hire police in public schools, predominantly through the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program. This legislation would eliminate the uses of federal funding to put or keep police in schools, and instead divert that funding toward the many other uses related to school safety that do not maintain police presence in schools.
- **Help schools hire counselors, social workers, and other support personnel instead of police.**
Over the past few months, we've seen school districts like Minneapolis and Denver decide to move forward without police in building safe and inclusive schools. This legislation would help districts that take this step by establishing a \$2.5 billion grant program to hire the counselors, social workers, nurses, school psychologists, and other personnel they need to support students and create safe schools without police. The grant program would also support schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports, as well as trauma-informed services and professional development.

The Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act would NOT:

- **Ban or remove police from schools.**
Whether a district uses police in their schools remains up to state and local decision-makers. There are many professional, kind-hearted police officers in Connecticut who serve in our schools. Lots of parents and kids trust them, for good reason. This legislation only affects how schools can use federal funding for school safety, as well as supporting schools with hiring mental health care providers and other health care workers that we know help marginalized students achieve better educational outcomes and reduce the "school-to-prison" pipeline.
- **Penalize schools for hiring police officers or stop federal funding from being used to hire non-police security personnel.**
Federal funding for school safety has many uses that do not include maintaining police. This legislation would divert any existing federal funding for school safety to these other uses. Through the legislation's \$2.5 billion grant program, overall federal funding for school safety would actually increase.

The experience Black and Latino students have with police in schools is often very different from their white peers.

- In Connecticut, Latino students who go to a school with a police officer present are six times more likely to get arrested than if they go to a school without a police officer.
- The same study, conducted by Connecticut Voices for Children, found that Black students are twice as likely to get arrested when a police officer is present.
- Data shows that the presence of police officers in schools does not measurably increase school safety or improve academic outcomes.

The Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act seeks to curtail the school to prison pipeline by shifting how the federal government invests in school safety - moving away from the presence of police and increasing the number of counselors, mental health professionals and trauma-informed staff that have been proven to improve school climate.