

Our oldest daughter will be starting kindergarten at Emerson in the fall of 2021 and our son will follow a year after. We are at the beginning of our partnership with the La Crosse School District and firmly believe in the power of public education.

We look forward to having the opportunity to voice our point of view on this issue once we have more information. Thank you for all you do, we appreciate your service.

Greetings,

First and foremost, thanks for all you do for ALL of the children in our La Crosse Schools. Your work is not easy, especially during these unsteady times. However, through it all, the school district will find a way to rise to the top as it has always done. Keep up the good work.

I have felt a strong desire to write a letter of support regarding the SRO program. I will let the letter stand as it is without any further introduction.

Thanks for taking the time to review and consider all opinions and issues regarding the topic as you have continued to do throughout the process.

With much appreciation. (Letter below)

To the La Crosse School Board and Dr. Aaron Engel,

I am writing in support of the School Resource Officer (SRO) program in the La Crosse Schools. I began my educational career proudly at Hamilton elementary school in 1982. I spent most of my career in education in the La Crosse school district, three years as a teacher and twenty-seven years as a high school administrator at La Crosse Logan H.S. I was an associate principal in 1994 when the Police Liaison Officer program was first introduced into the two high schools.

The program has since evolved into the School Resource Officer program after several years of experience, learning, and growing. First and foremost, we learned early on that the training and the selection of the officers was paramount to program success. This particular position was unlike any other law enforcement officer placement. The absolute most important attribute of the SRO is that of building relationships; relationships with students, with teachers and staff, and with our parent community. During my tenure at Logan high school, we had been most fortunate in that the last two officers placed at Logan H.S. were officer Jeff Graves, followed by his son officer Heath Graves. Both were and are model SRO officers and they have, by their work, created the template for this program to be so successful in our schools.

I would like to share a quick story about our opening day events at Logan H.S which became a tradition during my tenure as principal from 1998-2014. We began each first day with an all school assembly in our fieldhouse. We brought in each staff member in our school to be introduced to the students. This was generally done by departments such as English, Math, Technology Education, as well as the cooks, custodians, and all support staff. Since three fourths of the students knew most of the faculty and staff, there was applause given for each and every person after being introduced. You might imagine there were some popular teachers, and often a custodian or cook, who received some of the louder applauses. However, each and every year the loudest applause was always for our SRO, and for all of the reasons you might expect for having an SRO who is visible, a true professional, an educator,

and has earned the respect of all students and staff. In my opinion, another counselor or specialist in the school could never replace what the SRO's do on a daily basis.

In conclusion, I implore you to continue to make this a priority for all of the positive reasons, including school safety. The SRO's are there to teach, to council and advise, to be a conduit for students who see or believe something is not right in the school community. I am sure you will do due diligence to studying the daily duties and responsibilities of SRO's at each of the different levels of education. Please continue to give this decision the time and energy it deserves. I know the SRO program has had an extremely positive and beneficial impact on thousands of students over the years, and I firmly believe that continuing the program is the correct decision to make with the best interest of all students in mind.

Good Morning.

I hope that this email finds you well. I applaud your willingness to invite change, some of it much-needed into the district. I've been reading a great deal about Black Lives Matter's position on SROs. I am quite torn, honestly. I don't want my students to feel that they are living in a Police State, and I understand that the data doesn't show that an SRO officer always makes for a safe school.

I have been teaching for 16 years. During that time, I have always *felt* safer with an SRO in the building. If properly trained, they are wonderful resources and make a difference in students' lives. I am speaking now from personal experience. There is also the issue of a school shooting. If there ever is an incidence of violence, the officer in the building will get there faster. In those minutes, many lives could be saved. I have cerebral palsy and limited mobility. I feel like an SRO's quick response might save my life. The statistic that you shared about the percentage of out school suspensions concerns me. However, getting rid of the SRO is not a solution to that problem. Administrators suspend students, the SRO does not make that decision. If there is no SRO, what will happen if violence happens in my classroom? I will not be able to stop it. This is a frightening time for teachers. COVID is scary. I will not feel safe without an SRO. The SRO at Central is a great resource. He has positive relationships with the kids. He is also African American, and I think that he is a positive presence in the lives of many of our students of color. I understand Black Lives Matter's position. I hope that you understand mine. Statistics aside, I feel safer with an SRO in the building.

School Board Members,

I'm writing to you in regards to the news of a discussion regarding removal of the School Resource Officers (SRO). I am a parent of 2 children in La Crosse and have deep concerns about the possibility of removing these officers. They are a multi-faceted resource for our students, parents, and community.

I have gotten to know the officers while dropping them off at school and through the community. My children have seen them at community events and they seek to find them. They personally know my children by name. I feel the officers provide education, safety and security.

Please strongly consider keeping them part of the school system.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Good morning.

First let me thank you for your years of service to our District and Community as a Board member and now President.

Just as a reminder and to hopefully establish a level of credibility, before my retirement eight years ago after 27 years with the District, (I remain involved as an Adm sub across the District and as a coach) I had served 14 years as an Associate Principal at Logan HS, including nearly a decade as the Chair of the District Safety Committee. During that time we substantially grew the membership and oversight of the DSC, and one of those areas was the implementation and expansion of the Police Liaison Program, now known as the School Resource Officer Program.

The purpose of this email is to strongly encourage the Board of Education to maintain the SRO Program. Having the unique perspective of being involved with the SRO program from the start and having direct involvement with its growth and oversight over nearly a decade, I say with confidence that this program is extremely valuable. Having trained professional law enforcement officers present on our campuses significantly increases safety and lays the groundwork for positive and proactive relationships within our schools as well as in the community at large. I would certainly welcome an opportunity to speak with the subcommittee to answer any questions based on my past experience and to further share my perspectives based on nearly a decade of direct involvement.

I am an art teacher at Longfellow Middle School. I wanted to let you know that I am in full support of keeping the SRO officers in our schools. I feel they are an invaluable resource and are needed to keep middle school and high school students safe. Previous to this year, I have also worked at Logan High School and have experience watching officers at both schools work in tense situations, while still offering respect and patience when some students are physically out of control. I wish we lived in a different world where officers are not necessary in schools; however, until we have a complete shift in American thinking, family dynamics, poverty, equity, more therapy for kids and families in crisis - they are needed. I have seen both officers at my schools develop an excellent rapport with both students and staff. Until we have a better system in place that supports and affirms students so that they can get their needs met without major student breakdowns/trauma happening in schools ON A DAILY BASIS I am in total favor of keeping kids and staff safe by having an officer full-time on site. The officers that I personally know have only shown love and support to all students and truly want to help. I personally feel physically safer knowing that an officer is in the building when a student becomes out of control. Thank you for your time!

We are writing to you to offer our support in retaining one of the key members of the Logan Family, Officer Heath Graves. Two years ago Randy Nelson kicked off the school year by reminding District staff that building strong, trusting, caring relationships is the key to helping our students feel safe and learn. We can think of no one who works harder to build strong relationships with young people than Officer Graves. In his work at Logan, O.G. (as the students often call him) is a resource officer in every sense of the word. Here is a short list of some of the many things Officer Graves does for our building:

- He knows almost every student by name.
- He knows students' families and their situations. Those families trust him and are willing to work with him.
- He uses the relationships he builds to diffuse situations along with his calm, patient attitude.
- Many of his positive relationships are with African-American and Asian-American students, our two largest minority groups at Logan.
- He buys students food, clothing, and school supplies out of his own pocket.
- He regularly speaks to classes.
- He personally brings students to school that otherwise would be truant.
- Because of the trust he's built with students, our young people regularly come to him with information to head off dangerous or illegal situations.
- His interventions actually stop many situations from becoming a "police" matter and stop problems before "system" and court involvement become necessary.

At Logan, Officer Graves is the embodiment of the community-policing model that the La Crosse PD is striving for. Students know him, respect him, and our building is a safer place to be in because of him. Without a doubt we need more help to meet the needs of our students of color, our students who live in poverty, our students who are mentally or physically abused, and our students who have way too many ACE's. Removing Officer Graves from Logan, however, will not make any of those problems any easier.

Our staff at Logan (the cooks, custodians, teachers, administrators, AA's, TA's, and O.G.) always goes the extra mile for our students and we will do anything we can to help them grow and learn. Of course, Logan is not a utopia...there are so many ways we can continue to make our school a safer and more welcoming place to be for all students. We look forward to partnering with our BOE and Administration in those endeavors. In that process, though, we firmly believe in the good that Officer Graves does for our school and our Logan family. Consequently, we hope you will consider continuing the SRO program at Logan and for our other District schools.

I am writing to the school board to express my concerns over the possible termination of the school districts school resource officer program. Let me introduce myself first. I have one child that graduated from Logan High in 2019. I also have a sophomore to be at Logan. I am a substitute Teachers Assistant for the district. I sub in all different jobs in our district, Supervisory TA, Administrative Assistant, and Health Assistant. The last couple of years the place I work the most is Logan High School. I spent two years on the Logan Show Choir Parents board, and have been heavily involved in extra curricular activities in show choir and athletics.

I am absolutely dumbfounded when I read of the news to possibly abolish this program. I am wondering what is the basis for this? Are you aware of some specific situations that have led to this? What are those? I feel that there has not been enough concrete information given by the board as to why this may happen. As a parent we need to know what the basis is.

Im wondering if any of you truly have an idea of what our SRO's do? Im sure that you see them at school when you go to an important event at a school. You may even think that you know what their job is. The relationship that our SRO's have with our students is a unique one. All of them work very hard to gain the trust of the students in their school, and it shows. They have students that come to them with information about other students. The information could be that another student is depressed and going to hurt themselves. It could be that a student is getting bullied and they want the

SRO to help make it stop. They receive information that there could be illegal substances in school. Or that there is a threat to the student body. Our SRO's are able to form relationships with students that our administration cannot. They learn to trust their SRO and to know that they will be treated fairly. There is many times that with a parents approval, the SRO will give sick students rides home if they aren't feeling well and cannot be picked up by their parent. Did you know that our elementary schools also rely on the SRO's. There is many times that they are called over to a elementary school to help out with a child who is not behaving, or talk to a parent. Did you know that there are times when students have physical fights at school? Who do you think breaks them up? SRO's work hard to prevent fights from happening. They talk to the students who are involved, they can separate them or talk them down from solving a problem physically.

Being an SRO doesn't end when the school day does. I couldn't even count how many graduation parties ----has been invited to. Or could I count the number of times when we are out as a family and a student (current or former) stops us just to talk. -- has made friends and have formed relationships with families that will be our friends for life, and it all happened through their job as a SRO.

I understand that our world and our community is changing. But taking our officers out of our schools, will be a huge mistake. If you're concerned about supporting the students who don't have support at home, eliminating the SRO program isn't the answer. Students that are at risk need every person they can get to support them. If you abolish the program you are eliminating one more person that can support them.

I could keep going about all the positive things that our SRO program does for our schools. But I would like to challenge every one of you to find out what they do. What their day is like from the time they walk in school, until after the bell rings and even beyond that. Talk to some parents of students and talk to the school staff and see what they have to say about the SRO of their school. Talk to our students to get their thoughts. And maybe it would be a good idea to talk to the SRO's. Find out how they feel about their job, how invested they are and how they feel they are making a difference.

Im sure that many of you may think that my email and my feelings about this subject are skewed. I do have a unique look into the SRO program. But I am also a mom of students and work for the school district. Ive seen what a positive impact our SRO program has. I encourage all of you to not make the decision to abolish the program. If you are truly concerned about students learning, growing and being safe in our schools you will not get rid of the SRO program.

Thank you for your time in reading this email and if you have any thoughts or questions that I could answer, I'm available by email.

According to the WPI website, the La Crosse School District in the past 3 years, weapon violations have decreased and Black students incidents and suspensions have decreased. Therefore, the La Crosse School District staff building coverage and communication with students and visitors, continue to display a positive outcome for students' safety, which includes the SRO's. Anyone that insists the 21 schools don't need SRO's after this year, need to speak to the students and staff at Longfellow Middle School, because after we complete an "active threat shooter in the school" drill, each classroom I have been in for the past 5 years during that drill, the students overwhelmingly state to me and the teacher that they are glad the SRO is at school protecting them. That is what we need to continue to do at schools, keep the students safe because every life is worth saving!

During the past week I have reached out to black students across the spectrum. Kids who have never been in trouble, kids who have had disruptive issues in school and kids who I know have been at the JDC. Some I know personally, many only know who I am through the club and my own kids. If I spoke to them in the past, it was simply to say hello or how are you doing.

Below is the list of initials of the students I spoke with whose current ages are 14 to 20. I also spoke to several playing basketball at North Side Elementary whose names I do not remember. Not one stated they were afraid or had anxiety because Officer Graves is in the school, in fact, they feel safer and have, to quote one "a police officer that is going to be fair with me."

I have taken the time to talk with these current and former students.....I wonder if the individuals who believe they are scared to come into school have done the same? Or, is the argument based on a study or paper someone read with "someone's opinion." The funny thing about research and studies, as you probably know, they can be narrowed to what the author wants to accomplish. Are Rice Krispies good or bad for your health? Depends on who you ask.....and what their research actually focused on.

Rice Krispy Treats - Could be harmful to your health!

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Top 3 Myths about Rice Krispies and Why They Are Not True

Not everything that comes in a box is evil. Sure, a lot of them are, but rice krispies are just a simple, healthy breakfast cereal derived from natural rice grains and processed under strict control. They have no harmful chemicals, no fattening additives and are a healthy breakfast any day of the week. If you exercise portion control and do not mix in any additional indulgent ingredients to your bowl of rice krispies, all you have is a healthy, wholesome and delicious breakfast.

I am sending this email in regards to the role of SROs within the School District of La Crosse.

As a graduating student of Logan High School, I am urging you to look further into what SROs are achieving in our schools and look past the "knee-jerk" reaction of this current political climate.

The problem you (very correctly) are seeking to fix is the dissonance between law enforcement and underprivileged members of the community. This is a very real problem, and I cannot think of anybody who would not agree that closer partnership and collaboration between citizens and law enforcement is a good thing.

However, ditching our hard-working SROs is the wrong approach to this. Our police liaisons work with students from a young age to support them, provide counseling, and work to build a positive relationship between law enforcement and citizens. This program has been a significant step towards helping students become good citizens and good people, and if anything, we need more of this type of support in our schools. As a student who has lived through this and seen exactly what police liaisons do for our schools, I can attest to the fact that our SROs connect with students (especially underrepresented populations), work towards building a positive environment and community within the school and beyond it, and are exactly the kind of people this world needs more of. They are counselors, cool heads, and a welcoming presence, and they make our schools the kind of place that supports diversity and stands up against bullying. (It should be noted that our dedicated counselors do not seem to fulfill any of these roles. It is possible that they're doing some things behind the scenes that

I have never heard nor seen, but I believe that the argument that we need to shift funding to counselors is tenuous at best when you consider the amount of counseling SROs do in addition to their other numerous responsibilities).

As for the idea that our schools' SROs are overly policing and not contributing to safety, I would invite you to look further into what goes on in our schools. As a student, I often thought our disciplinary staff was almost too lenient. A lot of "OG"s (our universal term of endearment at Logan for Officer Graves is OG, which also happens to be slang for "original gangster," meaning someone who is awesome all the way through) work was in keeping kids out of drugs, and while he did confiscate a large number of vapes, his approach was always "I know you're going to hate me for this, but you can't have those around here." Rather than the overbearing, racist inhuman that seems to be a popular notion of an SRO these days, OG is a firm but compassionate part of our school community, and he is well respected for it. He's approachable, he checks in with students to make sure they're doing well, and he keeps our school safe and accepting in a social capacity as well as the typical break-up-fights capacity. I highly doubt any counselor could do everything OG does for our Logan family.

These SROs have supported us and provided us resources to be members of and contributors to a supportive community since elementary school. I know some of them personally, and they are good people doing good work. As is very evident to anyone who interacts with our police liaisons, our SROs are a critical part of our school community. I would strongly urge you to look past the superficial idea that all cops are bad and look into what truly goes on in our schools and the good that our SROs do. If you spent half an hour talking to staff and students, you would see just how highly we regard our police liaison, and how cutting ties with this program would be a counterproductive way to approach what it is your duty as our school board president and as a member of our community to achieve.

I appreciate the change you're trying to make, and I encourage every possible effort to better support the students of our schools, and in particular those who are underprivileged. I have faith that you will be able to see past transient politics and do what is right for our school district and for our students in the long run.

Thank you for your service, and thank you for considering this complicated topic.

My youngest is going to be a Sophomore at Central High School and I am in FULL SUPPORT of having a SRO at Central. My oldest son graduated from Central and I would not feel safe if there is not an officer at that school.

Not sure what the talk/action is but I feel the SRO should be at Central and that student safety is of utmost importance.

Thank you for your time.

I just want you to know that I was deeply concerned when I heard the mention of possibly ending the police liaison position at the high school. I have been a school counselor at Logan High School since 1991 and I cannot think of something that has concerned me more than the hearing of this. Our liaison

has been a true team member of our staff and has built relationships with our students to the point that he is considered by many students as someone they trust in our school and community. One of the greatest assets to Logan was the day they developed this partnership with the LaCrosse Police Department to allow a police officer in our schools. I have had students work through issues peacefully with our liaison because they trusted him to help them. Had he not been there things may not have gone so well. I cannot think of a time in my career at Logan where I have felt this person was not needed or we could do without the position.

I strongly support the continuation of the liaison position at the high school!!

I believe it is a very poor idea to remove the SRO program from our schools. My first question is why is this being considered, is it to address a direct concern or issue that has happen at our schools or is it a macro response ? My next question is what is the alternative to provide assistance to the staff, students going forward without SRO's? Lastly using logic that "all police(SRO)" are bad or sends wrong message then we should also hold teachers, administration , boards to the same group assumptions. Heaven forbid if something did happen in one of our schools, who would we call? I assume the response would be 911 (police) , so why is it ok for them to respond in a high risk emergency situation but not be present prior to this? I think a lot more thought and discussion needs to happen before the next step is taken and I was glad to hear you are looking at it closer and no action was being taken quickly.

I will leave with this feedback from my family experience. Both my kids (one at Longfellow and one at Central) feel strongly on the presence of SRO's. My 17 year old has had many open conversation's with current and past SRO's while our family is out in the community. He said it feels like he knows half the Police department due this positive interactions at school. He's has no problem walking up and saying hi to them. They have also stopped us out walking at community events to say hi to the boys.

If I can be assistance in helping this discussion please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I want to help do what is right and needed for our community, our schools and especially for our future (the kids).

Thank you for sharing your perspective. Our contract ends with the La Crosse Police Department next June and we vote on a budget in the fall, so I am calling for a process to be put in place whereby we can gather input from people in our district and important stakeholders. This, to me, seems like a more appropriate action than just terminating the contract or renewing a \$250,000 contract without allowing for any feedback or questions.

Thank you for response – budgets are always tricky. I appreciate the clarification as I did not see that in other information. I see this as an indirect cost but would offset other direct costs that would need to be factored in if eliminated. I'm all for negotiating a better price.

Regarding your article on the future of Police Officers in local schools, I have some comments and questions.

The main goal of SRO's on campus is to establish trusting relationships but you don't seem to think they are doing that job, why?

Are SRO's beneficial you ask...you say officers in schools have not proven to make them safer and tend to make students of color feel 'less safe'... To me this sentence implies something – are you actually saying the SRO's are imposing a threat to certain students and only making other students feel safe? Are you saying the SRO's are not doing their job? What data are you looking at to prove this comment? It seems that you are only giving your opinion on the situation and not the facts.

You also mention that in all the years the district has had police officers there continues to be a racial disparity when it comes to discipline – what does that actually mean? That only students of color are getting into trouble because the SRO's are ONLY identifying them and white students are getting away with the same offenses? It was refreshing to read the correction on your article that your stats on suspensions were not accurate.

Your quote of 'spending the several million dollars in the district to make schools feel safer so you don't feel it's necessary to have SFO's on site', I read that to mean that basically the officers are not needed because they don't do a job.

Instead of sharing your 'opinion' about the SRO's in the district, why don't you site all of the instances that the SRO's DID provide safety to students and staff, when they DID diffuse a dangerous situation or DID intercept weapons, drugs or alcohol from students... I'm sure you have access to that data.

Everyone is so interested in sharing a negative opinion of all police officers and imposing fear. If I was a parent in your district your article/opinions would spark fear and doubt on my student's safety, was that your real message?

How would you feel if you had a son or daughter that had taken an oath to serve and protect, then read this and feel as though the officers time and effort is just not worthy to have them in the schools or on the streets.

The negatives are such a small percentage of the big picture, why can't you, as the representative of the district, share all the positive things with the community that the SRO's have done in their tenure? Only sharing your opinion seems very insulting to the LaCrosse Police force, plants seeds of fear and seems very self-serving to certain folks with an 'opinion' that may or may not represent the entire board. The bottom line, don't just share part of the story, share the facts and be fair to all.

Included on this note are names I captured from the Police Department's website, I wanted to make sure my message was delivered to those directly related to the published article. To those officers in the schools and on the streets, please know you are still supported and respected despite all the negativity and hate that is being thrown your way as we see in daily news. Your oath to 'Protect and Serve' is still held in high regard with many of us - thank you for your service.

I will submit a condensed version of this to the paper's opinion section.

This email is in regards to the School Resource Officer program in the School District of La Crosse. My two sons are students of the school district. One graduated last year, and the other is a rising senior. They attended Lincoln Middle School and Logan High School. The resource officers at those two buildings were valuable in my sons' educations. The benefit my sons received went and goes beyond the programming the officers provide. Here are a few examples: conflict mediation, conversations about my sons' personal interests, an opportunity for my sons to interact with officers in a positive experience, and support at times of conflict that was intended to teach, not punish.

Since the topic how police presence in the schools make black and brown students feel was cited in the article in the La Crosse Tribune, I feel that I can speak as the mother biracial children, black and white. I understand the importance of appropriate police training and that the police officers are trained as police. I have the fear of what an interaction with the police may mean for my sons and my husband. I also know my sons gained because of their positive interactions with law enforcement that were possible because of the School Resource Officer program.

I know that my family's experience is not every family's experience. I am glad to see that you are establishing a subcommittee to discuss. When you establish that team, I hope that you would make sure you had a wide sampling of all the types of families. You also have the benefit of having brown and black people in the community who are alumni and are now adults in the district. Make sure you talk to them too.

In the article, number of suspensions was cited as data for reducing or eliminating the number of police in our schools. To the best of my knowledge, the suspensions of students are not determined by the police officers. Suspensions are determined by district administrators. The data you used does speak to systemic racism in schools across this country including La Crosse. It does not directly speak to the School Resource Officer program.

In addition, my concern is where the \$250,000 will be allocated. Since your argument was to reduce police presence based on the current awareness that is happening at this moment, I would hope that the money would be used to help with mental health and student services by increasing mental health providers and the number of cultural liaisons in the school district. My sons benefitted from having a cultural liaison at Lincoln Middle School. I benefitted as a parent from having that resource. As my children moved to the high school, the amount of support was not there because two people cannot meet the needs of the students of color across all elementary, middle, and high school buildings in this district.

If the money is not spent on additional personnel, then it should be put toward additional training for all staff members and possibly the police officers that interact with students. Just because Wisconsin doesn't mandate training doesn't mean that the school district and the police department cannot work together to make that training a reality in La Crosse. We could be a community to look toward as an example.

Thank you for considering your continued support of the School Resource Officer program in the School District of La Crosse. And if you determine not to keep the School Resource Officer program, please make sure you use the \$250,000 to address systemic racism since that is the argument you are using to have that money in the budget.

I have had the privilege of working with our Downtown Neighborhood Resource Officers. I admire the work they have done in our neighborhood and city and believe we are fortunate to have a thoughtful community policing program here in La Crosse.

As you read my email, please note that these comments are my own and are not intended to represent our neighborhood association.

At this time, I am not ready to advocate for the removal of SRO's from our schools. **However, I do feel it is imperative that the School Board form a subcommittee to thoughtfully evaluate the strengths and**

weaknesses of the School Resource Officer program. This is an important, multi-faceted conversation that should not be taken lightly and requires a communicative and transparent subcommittee process.

My hope is for this subcommittee to perform an investigation of the existing program to identify any potential flaws or injustices while also identifying strengths and successes. After an investigation is complete, I would like to see the subcommittee report its findings back to the school board and general public for conversation. From there, I hope the subcommittee will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program and, utilizing community input from organizations, schools, and the public, develop a recommendation on how to best move forward. I imagine recommendations might look something like this: A. Maintain existing program, B. Propose changes to existing program to improve outcomes and achieve greater justice and improved collaboration with social services and mental health counselors, C. Disband program and remove SRO's from schools (with accompanying recommendations for how to fill in any gaps this might create).

Again, my experience with our Downtown Resource Officers and Chief Kudron has been positive, and I believe they are advocates who are open to thoughtful discourse on how to foster a more just policing strategy here in La Crosse. I hope the subcommittee will include a representative from the community policing program, as well as representatives from local social work agencies and representatives from programs who support our local youth.

Before closing, I would invite you to check out the Chelsea Hub in Massachusetts, an innovative police-led initiative that brings together government agencies and 25 human service agencies in Chelsea to better connect at-risk individuals with services that can offer proactive and preventative support. I had the privilege of sitting in on a presentation by folks from the Chelsea Hub at the Wisconsin Association for Community Oriented Policing Conference back in January, and I was impressed by their level of commitment to those in their community who are most vulnerable. I think there may be some basic tenants in their model that could translate well into a school setting.

<https://chelseapolice.com/chelsea-hub/>

Thank you for being willing to take on this important topic. I look forward to watching the conversation develop.

I'm hoping you will read my entire email today, as I have a unique perspective on the SRO's from over the years. I am a mother of three boys, in grades 6, 9, and 11 in the School District of La Crosse. I was an elementary and special ed teacher before having kids. I stayed home with my kids for 15 years, and I am now the Main Office Administrative Assistant at Logan High. I get the privilege to work alongside our SRO Officer, Officer Graves on a daily basis. I couldn't be happier, or feel safer at a school, then I do at LHS with our team of administrators and SRO working together.

I'm going to start by being honest. When SRO's started getting assigned to schools 20 years ago, I never really understood the need for it. I personally thought it was "overkill." As an elementary teacher, I especially didn't see the need for them in schools and I thought it was a waste of money. Fast forward to when my kids entered middle school. They were going to an inner city school in Raleigh, North Carolina. My viewpoint started to change on SRO's the minute my kids stepped foot into middle

school. It was comforting as a parent to see a police car parked outside the school daily. There were numerous lockdowns at our school during their time there, due to security concerns and even protests. Some days my kids couldn't even leave their classroom, go to the bathroom, or get lunch, due to security concerns, without being escorted. Knowing a police officer was on site, always made me trust they would be safe at school. Yet, if I'm being honest, I still thought it was ridiculous for there to be police officers in schools in small towns like La Crosse, WI where it was "safe."

However, my opinion and viewpoint drastically shifted and changed 1.5 years ago, when I started working in the main office at Logan High School. I've completely changed my stance on SRO's in the La Crosse schools. SRO's are needed more than I ever thought or imagined. I guess I needed to be on the "frontlines" at the high school, to really see the need and use of them. I didn't recognize the need as an "outsider looking in." In fact, I believe what makes the schools in our "small town" in WI feel so safe, is the SRO's and the relationships they have developed with the kids, parents, and district employees. So many situations have not escalated or made the news, due to the quick response of our SRO's. For this we in the School District of LaCrosse are very fortunate.

Something else I'd like to point out is I'm shocked at how much social media and phones have changed the school setting over the years. One quick Snapchat, Instagram post, or text could escalate into a dangerous situation in just a matter of seconds. Our SRO at Logan High School literally never sits down all day long. I would love to see how many steps Officer Graves has on his "fitbit" daily. He constantly de-escalates situations that would otherwise escalate quickly, if he wasn't in the building and "present." It has been very eye opening to see first hand how much he does for Logan High School, and how much he helps the administration on a daily basis.

The relationships he forms with kids is what most impresses me most. Not just any police officer could walk in the school building and do the job of a SRO. Kids won't trust or respect just anyone off the streets. It takes a certain personality, patience, and kindness to be an SRO. Just like it does to be a teacher or an administrator. As a staff member, who works with the SRO daily, I see how well he works with our administration team, students, and parents, I think it would be a horrible decision to pull the SRO's out of our schools. As a parent, I'm scared at the thought of my kids going to school without a SRO on grounds. Especially in this day and age of technology. If I've learned anything this year working in a high school, it's that we need a SRO on campus. It sure surprised me, and I'm guessing it will surprise you too!

In closing, I believe in order to make a decision as big as removing SRO's from the La Crosse Schools, the school board should put together a committee of administrators, teachers, students, and parents to gather opinions, ideas, and more information. Also, with all of the technology we have available at our fingertips, at the very least there should also be a district survey going out to all parents of MS and HS kids, to see what the majority think. You were voted into your positions because the community trusted you would put in the time, energy, and effort into a decision as big as this. In a world where there is so much uncertainty right now, we will lose faith in the school board if you make this decision without research and opinions of those who use SRO's daily. You have a duty to the La Crosse community. I invite you to come sit in the offices of the middle and high schools around La Crosse for a week or two at a time to see what the SRO does and how much of a difference it makes in our schools. If you chose to come to Logan High School, I'll be sure to have a hot cup of coffee and a smile on my face waiting for you!

There's talk going around that there is discussion of removing the SRO program and officers from the LaCrosse school system.

As a parent of 3 school age children, two in elementary and one in middle school, I feel this would be a detriment to our children. There is so much inconsistencies at these times and making a change like this will for sure impact our children. I was one of the first classes to graduate from the DARE program in Lacrosse and this coming year I would have a second child also graduate from this program. There is so much taught in these types of programs that kids don't get at home for multiple reasons that it is imperative to leave the program in place. Im not against chance, in fact when my oldest kid graduated from DARE two years ago I was happy to see there was much added to the program since my time to make it fit with today's childhood experience.

I will also be the first to admit that my children don't lack in much. They are well off per se, but having a good roll model at school such as an officer can only be a good thing. In this day, it may be the only good experience some children get with an officer and by eliminating this program we may only be adding fuel to the flames of the current state of the country and attitude of police. I hope you think long and hard about eliminating the SRO program and find that it is a program worth keeping around for our kids, our city, and society.

It has come to my attention that tonight (6/22/2020), the board will be discussing the future of SROs in the School District of La Crosse.

For what it is worth, the relationship that students and staff at Logan High School have with Heath Graves, including students of color, is overall a very good one.

I am hoping that as the committee is formed and priorities are identified, staff and students in each building will be surveyed and that there will also be listening sessions scheduled in each building during meeting time and/or during homeroom on multiple occasions.

For buildings where issues are identified, PLEASE utilize the services and expertise of current SROs who are rated high by the staff and students in their respective buildings when addressing issues identified in other buildings.

I am writing in regards to the attempt to eliminate the SRO program in the La Crosse School District. As a parent and an educator, I am in favor of keeping this program in this school district. It has so many benefits. In addition to increased safety, it helps build positive relationships between students and police. These relationships play an important part in our students' lives with the increase of mental health issues as well as our current situation in this nation. While I acknowledge that there are systemic problems, making an abrupt decision may have long term, detrimental effects to all students and staff. Please consider surveying stakeholders before moving forward with this decision. Thank you for your time.

While I wholeheartedly agree that we need to examine policing procedures in our society as a whole (amongst many other things), I don't know what good would come out of removing the officers from our schools.

At Logan, Officer Graves is one of the key members of the Logan family. He is kind, caring, and for many students, possibly the only real, positive relationship they will build with a law enforcement officer. Rather than being a source of friction or stress for students, Officer Graves defuses situations. I've witnessed this many times during the lunch duty I share with him. To be honest, I wish I had his patience. I don't know where he gets his from.

As a white man in his 40s, I can't presume to speak for anyone else in another life situation; however, it seems to me that a part of the problem between law enforcement and citizens of color is mutual suspicion (the deep historical roots of which are another conversation in an email I wish to keep brief). With that said, to remove SRO's from our schools would deny all students the ability to see that police are people too. Yes, a poor SRO could do more harm than good, but so can poor teachers and administrators. If done well, the SRO's are an asset to the building--for everyone.

Finally, as a person who has never owned a gun, much less fired one, I do find it comforting to have a professional in the building who is trained to handle very stressful situations--whether they are fights, students who are out of control, or worse. We are blessed at Logan to have three amazing administrators who keep our building running well and orderly, but there are certain situations which arise which should only be handled by a trained officer. I hate to be melodramatic, but having a policeman or woman on site versus waiting 5 minutes for one to show up could be the difference between life or death.

While I applaud your willingness to have difficult conversations--our society and community need to have more of them--I hope that in the end we retain the SRO program in La Crosse. I firmly believe that the good it does far outweighs any problems it creates.

During this time we need to relook at traditional police roles. We need more police/community interaction that is not enforcement, especially with minorities. We need to be doing more of exactly what the SRO's and DARE officers are doing in our schools every day.

If anything, the school district needs to fund more SROs so their time is more available for listening to community needs and building relationships.

The SRO main role is to break those barriers for our at risk children of color that we are protesting about; for all at risk children of any color for that matter. It's not about enforcement and keeping the general student body safe.

Please learn more and you will see why we need to keep and/or grow this program.

My son will be a senior at Central High School in the fall. Could you please explain to me why you are considering making the SRO program "ad hoc"? Maybe you should first look at the reasons why the

program was created from the beginning. I am sure the school administrators can easily explain and lay out how the program has improved their school and their students' relationships with law enforcement officers in the community. There are many fights or near fighters at Central on a daily basis where the SRO is present and handles the situation because he has gotten to know the students. I believe this affects every student and family in the La Crosse School District. Why hasn't the school board sent information about this possible outcome out to all parents in the LSD? I am planning to be present virtually at the School Board meeting this evening but would really like a reply to this email.

I am writing to you regarding the SRO program. As a parent of two students who went to Logan, and as a TA at Logan, I have seen first hand the importance of having a SRO at our high schools.

Before making any decisions about the program I strongly encourage you to have one or two board members shadow Officer Graves at school for a few days once school begins to see first hand exactly what he does.

- Who would handle intruders/active shooter situations if it were to happen?
- Who would investigate kids bringing in substances? Do you think teachers can handle that?
- Who would do welfare checks on students as situations arise?
- Officer Graves and likely others are an essential part of the Medical Team and usually the first responder when called on.
- The officers serve an important role as security at sporting events, watching for inappropriate behavior.

Officer Graves in particular has a special way of talking to students and calming the situation down. Kids from all backgrounds like him. Interview some former Logan students to learn what a great role model Officer Graves has been to the students.

Wasn't the purpose of having a SRO in the schools to protect the safety of the students and the staff, and to promote a trusting relationship between the police and students? Please don't let recent world events demission the positive effects Office Graves has had on students at Logan High School and the community. Any thought of ending the SRO program will negatively impact the school and promote chaos.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Our country is hurting, and the Black Lives Matter movement is strong, as it should be, but as businesses are quick to show some kind of superficial support, we as an educational system need to stand back and gather ALL of the information. Just as teachers teach the whole child you need to dig deeper into the whole data before allowing the media to run stories that damage the good we have been doing for our students; Why are our statistics higher for students of color? Are these behaviors validated in our schools? What programs are we implementing in our elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools? Are we making it harder on our students because expectations change based on what school they attend in our district? What are we doing to educate our students, teachers, counselors, SROs? Are these programs carried throughout the district? Why are we NOT making these programs district initiatives?

I challenge you to NOT jump on board, but to really do your due diligence to study the data. I have battled gender inequality my whole life and even more in my professional careers. If I asked you to look at the same data based on gender, what would you find? Would this make the headlines in the newspapers right now? I don't think so.

I know it comes down to budget and money, but at whose expense? You have an obligation to show equity for ALL of the students, staff, and community members for the School District of La Crosse. Eliminating our Student Resource Officers is NOT the answer. I encourage you to NOT eliminate our SROs, but instead allocate the funds necessary for our SROs to get the training you feel is essential for them to deal with difficult situations. Ask yourselves: Do we have issues with our current SROs? How does the staff value what they do? How can the partnership be better? How does consistency play a role in our district? How and what things can we do to educate our staff, students, and community to better deal with difficult situations? There have been numerous conversations about getting full time mental health positions in the schools, yet we have not seen any support in this area either. What is the true root of the problem – is it the race of our students, is it the behaviors, is it mental health? What is behind the data?

The time for change is long overdue, but the changes needed must encompass a multitude of areas that have been pushed off due to budget restrictions and ever-changing priorities.

As a parent of a soon to be freshman and junior at Logan High I am 100% uncomfortable with the La Crosse school district not renewing the SRO contract to work and support our schools. My children already have feelings of not being safe, you remove the officers and dogs and you really will create a unsafer environment. I feel you will have many family's looking into other districts if this occurs. I know we will be looking to going to Aquinas, Onalaska, West Salem or Holmen if police officers are removed from the la crosse school district. Appreciate your time.

Every life is worth saving! Adults share the responsibility to keep our children safe everyday, by using all the resources available in our communities. Students at school are vulnerable to being physically injured or killed. School staff are trained every month to observe and listen for threats, and to report those threats to the administration and law enforcement quickly - to keep everyone safe because every life is worth saving! I have observed this positive outcome measure at Longfellow MS for the past 5 years, working closely with the professional compassionate staff and the SRO officers - it is a combination that is worth the investment and resources!

Daily I have observed the SRO reach out to students in need of positive pro-social attention, that they may not receive anywhere else in their lives on a daily basis! It makes my day when a student that warmly greets the SRO when they see them, and the SRO reciprocates that warm greeting back to the student! This is a great success in the La Crosse School District: students from many diverse cultures feel that they belong to our school, despite whatever disadvantages there might be in their environment outside of school.

The SRO assigned to schools is a priority for students' success! The budget for the SRO program is \$250,000, divided by 21 schools is about \$10,000 /school, that is a hell of a bargain for every life is worth saving! Keep our dedicated SRO's in our schools for students' safety!

Data shows that absentee fathers along with poverty in the home, are the primary detrimental cultural issues resulting in student's trauma and/or negative behavior toward school staff and their classmates.

A large percentage of this population eventually displays enough negative behavior, that they will become involved in the juvenile justice system by breaking the law. We need school staff and the SRO's to continue using trauma informed care for these students, to intervene and nourish these students' trust and safety!

Just a year ago, the national narrative included the students and staff at schools were in serious danger with school shootings. There was discussion that schools needed additional support from law enforcement and possibly arming staff at schools to increase safety and prevent shootings.

What has improved in the past year with school safety, that caused the La Crosse School Board President to state on public radio that the SRO program would need to be eliminated and the incoming Superintendent stated in a La Crosse Tribune article that data would need to be collected, to discover what other resources could be used in place of the SRO budget of \$250,000? One of the answers to that question is that in the last 4 months, violent and deadly riots has caused parents to reconsider sending their children to school (in addition to the Covid 19 health crisis), due to the local government not protecting the community from the rioters breaking into private property, stealing private property and setting fire to those properties, and assaulting and murdering citizens. After watching the national narrative in the past 4 months, we need to increase school safety by demonstrating to the citizens of this community that the School District of La Crosse will continue using the SROs in all 21 schools.

Why would the La Crosse School Board President Dr Laurie Cooper Stoll state on the WIZM radio in June, that more than 90% of suspensions in our district are for students of color, without stating an accurate source? Superintendent Dr Aaron Engel stated a couple of days later in the 6/18/20 Tribune article which corrected her statement and stated it was half (46%), and that Black students are out of school suspended five times higher than white students, but he also didn't supply a source for those statements. Why? Educational leaders need to lead the way when discussing issues in the public eye or in private, by using sources that are accurate and can be checked for accuracy. That is what the educators in the classroom instruct students to do when completing their work. When educators discuss issues, please use all the accurate data involved, not just a statistic based on race.

Hopefully, everyone that speaks at this Monday's school board meeting and the workshops and additional school board meetings, will provide accurate data and accurate sources when discussing issues, especially about the trauma-sensitive classrooms for our grief stricken students and the SRO contract.

Dr Engel, it is my hope that someone that represents the School District of La Crosse, will provide accurate data and accurate sources on students that receive school discipline, regardless of race. Please share the demographics of those students in their environment. This would include fatherlessness, near poverty or poverty living conditions, amount of times their families have moved since being in our schools, if they still are living with anyone from their nuclear family, have been or currently in foster care or have been adopted, if they have been abused or assaulted or witnessed domestic violence in their home environment, and if any siblings or children or young adults living with them that have been involved with the criminal justice system. Many of these students will have high ACES scores if just a couple of these demographics are negative for them. Those students need to be identified so we can save them by minimizing their negative environmental interactions, increasing their chances for success by expanding therapy for their grief support, and discovering additional training for school staff and SROs in trauma-sensitive classrooms!

This fall, I will be starting my 6th school year of utilizing my compassionate, dedicated, and professional skills with the students, staff and visitors at the Longfellow MS. It brings me great joy to observe and interact with everyone! Previously before I relocated back to La Crosse, I worked for the Iowa Dept of Corrections for 21 years, and during the last half I was the Re-Entry Coordinator for intensive supervision inmates, placing them in 21 NW counties when they received their parole. After many trial and error moments, I was able to convince wardens to start father parenting groups, reading books to their children groups via audio then video tape (now it's probably done virtually), and finding housing/ employment/ medical and mental health services, and community action agencies for their success. It worked wonders for the inmates, their families, their new communities, their employers and my coworkers! Wherever I work or volunteer, I invest myself heavily. In the late 1980's, I was the Southside Mpls Boys and Girls Club Guidance Counselor, two blocks from where George Floyd was murdered, and I lived 5 blocks from that intersection. It breaks my heart to see the death and destruction in that neighborhood! I want to return there to help rebuild that community, but first I will be trying to assist La Crosse continue to be a great leader with our students, their families, and our staff!

One joyful observation for all of you during this highly stressful time in our nation. This last school year, I was assigned the 6th grade lunch period, when the EBD program didn't require my services elsewhere. One of the students struggled daily with sitting next to peers successfully, usually they would voice their irritation to me or other staff about his negative statements and negative actions. After observing him take other student's food without asking them numerous times, I asked him if he was still hungry after he ate his school supplied lunch, he answered yes. I asked him if it would be ok that if he is hungry again, to find me and I would take him thru the lunch line again, he would select another main food item, and the lunch ladies would enter a code for him and he could sit back down to enjoy the food. Of course, I paid for it by entering money for the future in the computer, and received the approval of the Principal and Vice Principal. The positive measure outcome? The student and peers never complained again to me about him. I also gave him money at the school dance for the concession stand = he was a happy camper!

Please help me continue to keep the La Crosse School District students, their families and friends, our staff and the visitors to think they are safe, secure and welcome in our buildings and grounds!

I talked to my 14 year old son, about how he felt in regards to the SRO. He felt the SRO was an important position and made him feel safer at school. He explained how the SRO would be called in to help at school during difficult situations that school staff needed extra support with and he talked about how the SRO would strengthen relationships with the students by doing such things as playing a little basketball with them etc..

I am sending this information to you in support of the SRO position in our La Crosse Schools, and the important role it plays in creating a positive and safe environment for our children to learn in.

I am a teacher at Logan High School. I will begin my 36th year of teaching Mathematics in September 2020. I just watched the school board meeting from June 15, 2020 dealing with the SRO program. If I understood what was presented, I would ask that you consider **not rushing** into making a decision by October 2020. The idea of forming a committee to further study/look into the SRO program has merit, but forming a committee over the summer months has challenges. I think this committee

should consist of all stakeholders including administration, police officer(s), teachers, students, parents, administrative assistants, teacher assistants, cooks and custodians.

Thoughts for you to ponder:

- * How will you **and** will there be time to contact administration, police officer(s), teachers, students, parents, administrative assistants, teacher assistants, cooks and custodians over the summer break and coordinate schedules? Will all of the stakeholders who want to be involved be available during the summer?
- * I think students should be a part of this committee. At the high school level, students do not have their technology devices. I am not sure all would be connected via email and/or would be checking their school email.
- * Would it be better to form the committee when school starts?
- * The SRO program has been in the district for 27-ish years. I think making a decision quickly in the summer-fall **and** in the midst of a Covid-19 pandemic over a 3 month-ish period is not a good choice.
- * From the presentation, I heard that the committee was going to decide how the \$250,000 should be spent and the SRO program was already not going to exist in the future. Should the committee's purpose be to help the board decide if the SRO program continues and in what capacity?
- * I did not hear in the presentation what good things the SROs do in our schools. Of the three broad capacities mentioned: building relationships, safety and system reform, I have seen firsthand the value of an SRO at Logan HS via building relationships and safety many, many times.

I would hope that my comments are taken into consideration as you move forward with this major decision.

I am writing in support of the SRO program in the La Crosse School District. I have heard media reports that the contract for this program might not be renewed when it is next due. I feel that this program is important and should be continued.

These SRO officers know our kids by name, they know which kids need a boost or extra guidance, and they are modeling responsible and healthy behaviors. Hopefully they can intervene and change the course for some of these kids. It's reassuring to know that they are working for us, in both enrichment and safety/security roles around the schools.

I have two children in La Crosse Public Schools. My oldest has gone through the DARE program and just finished 8th grade at Longfellow. My youngest will get that programming this coming year in 5th grade at Southern Bluffs. Officer Jo was at Longfellow school greeting kids and families during end of year drive through drop off/ pick-up. My teenager pointed out how nice she is, and that she knows what's going on with all the students, and Officer Jo even knows her name. When a teenager speaks up with praise, you know that the officer is doing something right!

Please continue this important program.

I'm reaching out to you today to implore you to keep the School Resource Officer program in our schools!

As a parent of two children in the district, one in middle school and one in high school, I believe it is imperative that they feel safe at school and the SROs give them that sense of security. We live in a scary

world nowadays. The number of students and parents who struggle with mental illness and drug or alcohol addiction is clearly rising. The issues that accompany these diseases definitely spill over to the classroom. My children shouldn't have to worry about being hurt at school because the teacher can't effectively de-escalate a violent situation.

In my opinion, the SROs are not in the schools as a preventative measure. They are there to react to situations that arise where teachers are not trained or prepared to handle them. Please imagine yourself in the staff's position. How do you protect 25-30 kids in a classroom and try to help the child who is having a violent episode, especially when that child is more than likely bigger and stronger than you are? Your first instinct is to . . . Call for help! Please don't get rid of the helpers!

Your proposal to eliminate the program now has an interesting coincidence to what is happening in the country and certainly sends a message that you believe police officers are an intimidating, awkward presence that children fear. This is a very wrong and disheartening message that's being conveyed.

I also feel that the discussion of eliminating this program should very much include school administrators, teachers, students and parents. I think you will see that there is an overwhelming amount of support for the program. Our SRO officers build lasting relationships with many students - some of which may experience the tough side of law enforcement in their home lives and need that positive interaction. Our SROs go above and beyond their job requirements to connect with the kids and families in their schools.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope you will make the decision to at least involve stakeholders in this very important decision.

I would be opposed to removing the SRO position from the middle schools and the high schools. I believe they offer a positive interaction to the students, staff and community.

I believe it the interaction that is provided with the SRO encourages better relations between students and law enforcement just as community officer do in at risk neighborhoods. Adding mental health services in addition to officers would be beneficial but I do not feel that removing the SRO relationship would be advised especially for schools especially in at risk neighborhoods.

I would support removing out of school suspension of the disciplinary options as I don't see how those provide a positive outcome for students or faculty. In school suspensions would be a significant consequence for most behavior issues.

Thank you for your work and efforts with our schools.

I wanted to message to let you know how vital the school resource officers are at school. I would hate to see the board take action regarding a reallocation of funds without input from staff and parents. I understand that public comments will not be allowed at Monday's workshop.

I am writing with concern related to the recent discussions about possible removal/restructuring of the School Resource Officers(Sro). As a parent of 3 children receiving their education from the La Crosse School District, I am bewildered as to the reasoning for possible reductions to this program. From my interaction and stories heard, these officers serve multiple purposes in the schools. While “statistics” can clearly define/calculate the enforcement role these officers play, there are far greater roles that can’t be as easily accounted.

These officers serve as examples for students, providing positive role models for kids in need. Having them in the schools gives students the opportunity to interact in positive ways with police officers, eliminating fear that can be associated with police encounters. These officers know the kids names, wave to the parents in the morning, all while providing security to the place we entrust our children will be safe.

Please do not take this service away from our children, educators, and community.

Thank You for your time.

I recently learned that Board President Dr. Cooper Stoll introduced a proposal to remove School Resource Officers from La Crosse Public Schools. I want to share with you my opinions about the issue.

I would like to share a personal experience with the need for a School Resource Officer. This last school year, my 8th grade son came home and said a student was talking about shooting up the school and had made a song/video about it. I asked my son if anyone had reported it to school officials and he thought so. The next morning, I emailed SRO Ethan Purkapile to share with him what I had heard from my son. Officer Purkapile then spoke with my son and the child who wrote the song. They also did a threat assessment and spoke with the child’s parents and had the video removed. What would happen if there wasn’t a SRO to handle those types of things? Who would?

Dr. Cooper Stoll was quoted as asking: “Given all that we’ve done, the moneys we’ve spent in the district to make our schools ‘safe,’ why is it necessary to have police officers in the school?” A camera isn’t going to stop a school shooter. Having locked doors is great, but isn’t going to stop someone from coming in before the doors are locked. A potential shooter may think twice knowing there is a police officer on duty. Having a SRO on site could potentially save lives by responding right away versus waiting 5-10 minutes or more for police to arrive.

A shooting is the probably most terrifying thing a parent can imagine happening at school, but there are lesser offenses of bullying and conflict happening every day at our schools. SROs get to know students on a personal level and allow them to connect with a member of law enforcement on a positive basis. They understand the real lives of students/people who are struggling and help students learn what law enforcement can and should look like and form a positive relationship with them, similar to what Neighborhood Resource Officers do in neighborhoods throughout the City of La Crosse.

It was reported that Dr. Cooper Stoll shared statistics that having police officers in schools have not proven to make them safer, **nationally**, and tend to make students of color feel less safe. The data from other parts of the state or country are not necessarily representative of what is happening in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Dr. Cooper Stoll also indicated that more than 90% of students suspended in La Crosse Schools are students of color, largely black students. It is my understanding that the Principal and/or Superintendent would make those decisions and not the SROs. Schools have other avenues and resources that they employ before referring a juvenile for criminal charges. In addition, those referrals come from Social Workers and not the School Resource Officers.

Have you met with any of the School Resource Officers at La Crosse Schools? If not, I would strongly suggest you do so and ask them what it is that they do and express whatever concerns you have about their performance or job duties. In addition, have you discussed any of your concerns with the administrators, teachers, and other school staff to find out their opinions on the issue? They are also directly impacted by your decisions. Please take some steps on resolving whatever issues you believe there are before taking such drastic actions that could have tragic consequences.

I appreciate your time in reviewing this letter and hope that you will take these thoughts into consideration when making such an important decision.

Just wanted to tell you that I am strongly against getting rid of the police officers in the schools...sick of the actions of a few people trying to change everything for everybody.

Tell them I said there's nothing worth protecting more than our children...so quit bowing to the loud minority.

I could go on, but I would end up swearing and stuff. Unfortunately Common Sense isn't too common.

As a 20 year veteran teacher, 12 of which were in the La Crosse School District at Central HS, I implore you to not eliminate the School Resource Officer. Over the years I have had 100's of personal contacts with the SRO and every single time it was professional, positive, and credibly taken care of. Whether it was a student who needed help because of drugs and alcohol, a student to student fight, drugs in the building, counseling of students for potential runaway...the list can go on and on. The safety of the students and staff is also at risk by the removal of the SRO position. As a father of a student at Lincoln Middle School and a student at Central I also, as do they, feel safe that we know the SRO is in the building. Please do not let emotion of the current time make this decision. We need SRO's in every school.

I am writing to you as a current teacher and coach within the La Crosse School District, but also as a community member and a parent of kids that will be attending La Crosse Schools in the near future. I have a significant amount of experience working with officers in our SRO program, more in my previous role as an at-risk coordinator in La Crossroads Alternative High School than in my current role as a Social Studies teacher. I worked in my previous role for seven years and I won't try to share all of the experience I have had, as your time is valuable, but I wanted to give you my general impressions of the SRO relationship and my resulting opinions on the SRO model in our schools. I have bolded my main takeaways, sorry- it's the teacher in me, I can't help it!

During my time working with Heath Graves, our longtime SRO who is a Logan graduate and has children in our building, I have seen the positive impact of the relationships built by having an SRO in our school.

I have seen students of all backgrounds develop trusting relationships with Heath through conversation in the hallway, joking around, and stopping in his office for a quick check-in. Some of these students deal with incredibly challenging situations outside of school, situations that make them more prone to requiring behavioral or crisis-type interventions at some point in their school career. These relationships built on the front end have paid tremendous dividends when these situations occur. These dividends include mitigating behavioral incidents, avoiding escalated consequences, and getting students help with challenging situations. **The positive consequences of the relationships that are built do not show up in suspension data, or discipline referral numbers. The amount of times our SRO has prevented kids from making poor decisions vastly outweighs the amount of times he has had to act in a law enforcement capacity within the school.** This cannot be overstated.

On the rare occasion where our SRO was not present in our building, the nearest shift officer would respond to the high school in the event that a situation occurred beyond the scope of staff abilities to intervene. While well-intentioned, shift officers lack many of these prior relationships or the experience that our SROs quickly develop as being part of our school community. This can lead to misunderstanding or inconsistent response to situations (as one officer may treat a situation differently than another). **Consistency of expectations is vital to the development of students, especially those that lack consistent expectations outside of school. These interactions are inevitably learning experiences, and the students are better served when an SRO with specific experience delivers consistent, compassionate expectations. In this way, having an SRO in our school has decreased the chance of students having a negative experience with police or our juvenile justice system.**

I feel that the recent events and protests have appropriately asked communities to reevaluate the role of police and how the community can be best served. Progressive approaches to policing such as SRO and Neighborhood Resource Officer (NRO) programs are examples of community policing that build relationships between the members of the community and police. A firm belief of mine is that education is based on relationships with our students. **Our current SRO model fits this foundational belief and represents the kind of community connection that we should expect from our police department.** This is not to say we should avoid examining our program to see what works and what could be improved. I believe abandoning the SRO program, as some other communities have decided, is the wrong approach for our students, staff, and community. Abandoning the SRO program would be abandoning the positive relationships our SROs have built with our students. This is a valuable partnership that should be used to make our schools and community more effective at their mission.

Thank you and I appreciate your thoughts as we all continue on a journey to make our schools responsive and equitable to the students and families we serve,

As a parent, I think that SRO's absolutely serve a purpose. Ideally, they are there to form connections with students and help keep them safe while guiding them to make good choices HOWEVER, in my experience, an SRO absolutely has to have an unbiased approach to ALL students and families (persons of color, disability, economic status, etc). A "tough love" approach doesn't always work with kids. Today, we need to understand human behavior and how it impacts the decisions people make in

their daily lives. Obviously you can't judge a person's character during a job interview so it is hard to say from my perspective how to accomplish this goal but I have seen firsthand what an unknown/known bias can do to a student. I believe an SRO has to truly be there to want to make a difference which I used to believe was true.

I feel a need to protect my child but also a responsibility to protect faculty and staff at school as well. Faculty should never have to be afraid to come to work but a student should also never have to feel intimidated by someone who is there to serve and protect. This is an incredibly difficult subject. I personally would feel better having an SRO at school but one who isn't afraid to challenge his or her own potential biases and participates in ongoing training regarding diversity of all types.

From -----perspective, only students who are in trouble ever really see the SRO. I know SRO's aren't teachers but why wouldn't you want them to have a more positive place in a school. Have them stop in to a health class to talk about drugs or crime, have them stop in to a PE class and hang with the kids?? Make them relatable to ALL students and not just someone a student has to interact with when they are in trouble.

Hello All- I come to you today to share my disappointment in the article I saw today. I feel that it would not be a wise decision to not have SRO's in our buildings. I have witnessed amazing relationships between our students and SRO's. Not only are they present in our schools but in our neighborhoods. Our SRO Jovanna Randall comes into our building and serves lunch and breakfast to our students, she joined us for walking school bus and most recently she came and supported us at a fundraiser because it was for her kids! At the elementary level we do not always need SRO's but when we do they are sensitive to the students needs. They are also teachers, they teach students what they could do differently for example when we had a student pull the fire alarm and call 911. I look at Officer Graves at Logan who had big shoes to fill in his father's absence and he goes above and beyond in that school and community. If we do not have SRO's we will be forced to have to wait for the city to respond if we need them, which in turn could escalate real quick. With budget cuts and staffing are at capacity trying to meet student needs, our elementary schools only have a social worker or guidance counselor trying to do the job of the other... I encourage you to reconsider. There is a lot of unrest right now in our community over what the fall will look like with COVID and taking away our SRO's would only feed into this. Thank you for taking time to read this.

I understand that these are unprecedented times of uncertainty. I also understand there needs to be a change in how officers handle situations. I DO NOT, however, support the removal of officers from our school district. They protect our children and give them positive role models to see daily. It seems as though that is what this movement is about, dragging down the image of the police. I understand there are racial issues, but that has nothing to do with an officer protecting my child. She actually wants to be a police officer when she grows up. I am heartbroken at the negativity that everyday, good officers have been given. Please, keep them in our schools! Thank you for your time!

We need the officer on campus. It's an opportunity for our children to interact with officers. Gives officers a time to be a mentor to our youth. Also helps protect students from potential harm. I have a

student who was targeted for no reason by another kid last year. Having an officer in school made me feel safe to allow my son to continue to go to school in La Crosse.

Don't give into to media pressure and dissolve the current relationship between the schools and the communities officers.

I really think that taking the SRO's out of the schools is a horrible idea. They keep the children safe. Either in 2018 or 2019 there were 2 families that had issues between each other. At Logan High School and at Central High School there were fights and threats of gun violence. With the SRO on campus the response time is quick. Take the SRO's out of the school and response times are considerably slower. We need SRO's in the schools. Even at middle school level the amount of violence in the past 2 years has been out of control. A club of bikers had to transport a child to school because he got jumped. I don't know if I would send any of my children to a school that didn't have SRO's. All of my children are biracial. I know my own son had some issues while attending Longfellow middle. The SRO's were amazing and genuinely cared about my child. Taking them out is a mistake. I vote we keep them.

As a mother of 2 students at Logan High School..i for one am in favor of the SRO officers..as a support system for the students...and teachers. In this day and age there are many troubled kids and i feel much better every day sending my kids to a school where i know they are protected by an officer on site...if there is a school shooter...who is going to take action ...sally social worker? the administrators..teachers...social workers and lunch ladies are now also supposed to have weapons training or what?...they have enough going on in their jobs...and dont want to be responsible for that too

In addition i think there are alot of kids who enjoy the sro officers and need a connection at school to know they could go to if they are being abused..bullied...maybe dont know what to do about a situation..and teachers sometimes dont have the time to sit down with a kid..or maybe the teacher spots something off and can partner up with the sro to assist....

Perhaps you should use a twofold approach if there is a feeling of bias...use a team of a social worker or counselor of some kind.and plain clothes officer..i do think the uniform will throw off alot of kids..the relationships need to be there...and maybe a separate area other than the school office..a room for the counselor and officer...a kid could stop by without everybody having to see them..may be less intimidating..easier for them to open up..if they see something to report..need a sit down they cant get at home..need help from a situation at home but dont need the whole office staff to know....more of a resource center for kids but has the knowledge and training needed for the threats..issues that can come up

I support the sros in all these schools it is much needed

Thanks to officer weaver Logan middle school...and officer graves at Logan high school for keeping my kids safe all these years

I am a father of student in the School District of La Crosse. Today I received an email that the School District of La Crosse will host a virtual forum to discuss the district's ongoing review of the

School Resource Office (SRO) program. In the email, superintendent Dr. Aaron Engel stated the following:

- Data shows that in schools where there are SRO programs, there is often an increased rate of suspensions of students of color, in particular Black students.
- We've had some students share that SROs negatively impact their feelings of belonging and increase their fear while attending school. As a school district committed to the wellbeing of all of our students, we want to disrupt anything that negatively impacts belonging, increases fear, or contributes to the school to prison pipeline.

I was shocked that the SRO data is interpreted in favor of political correctness rather than maintaining the safety and wellbeing of all students in the School District of La Crosse. Let me explain the falsified and dangerous conclusion from the fact below:

Fact: There is often an increased rate of suspensions of students of color, in particular Black students.

Conclusion: SROs negatively impact their feelings of belonging and increase their fear while attending school.

Just like the notorious Black Lives Matter, when black people are treated by law enforcement, why all media only focus on the behavior of law enforcement, while none ask why black people don't follow the orders of police officers. Today, the same biased interpretation applies to SRO program. SRO program is a great program to protect students (including my daughter) and maintain a safe environment of study in each school. The reason why SRO program suspends increased rate of students of color, is because increased rate of students of color violate the rules and regulations. This is the root cause. Actually, students, regardless of race or color, will be suspended if he or she violates the rules. That is the law and order that governs and protects us and that therefore is the foundation of our civilized community.

Through education, students should learn to respect and obey laws and orders to become a good citizen when growing up. Violation of laws and orders will lead to punishment and severe consequences. That is what each citizen should bear in common with our founding fathers.

However, in today's disrupted atmosphere of political correctness, suspension of students of color is interpreted as SRO is unfair and negatively impact the feelings of students of color. Eliminating SRO will surely reduce the rate of suspension but will result in good students exposed to danger, fear, and contribution to the school to prison pipeline. Remember, people are sentenced to prison because of violation of law, not because the existence of law. Eliminating laws will lead to more crimes.

The correct methods to decrease the rate of suspensions of students of color should be teaching them how to respect and follow the school rules and teacher orders and let them understand that the consequence of violating rules is suspension.

We love each student in the School District of La Crosse regardless of color, race, family background, culture, etc., but the safety and wellbeing of whole community is guaranteed and protected through laws, codes and rules. Nobody should stand above the law and order. I appreciate board members' effort to provide students with a safe and healthy educational path that will lead students to their goal and success in the future.

Sincerely,

A father of student in the School District of La Crosse

I work with students every day who are considered at-risk for one reason or another. Many of them have already had police involvement in their lives and have a negative feeling about police officers in general. The presence of the SRO in the building has served to build a bridge between these students

and police officers. Even if they aren't always happy to see him, they have built a relationship and a trust that they would not have without an SRO in the building every day. This is an important bridge.

The SRO program is a proactive way for officers to build relationships with our students. Instead of just showing up when things are going wrong, they get to be there when things are going well. This allows our SRO to de-escalate situations that may arise more effectively because of the relationship they have. As educators, we know the importance of the relationships we build with our students and how it helps when a crisis arises. The same is true for officers. Without that relationship, they would not be able to de-escalate students as effectively. This is not only important for the safety of everyone involved, but also for the long-term impact of the student. It allows them to bounce back quicker and rejoin their peers in a more timely manner.

I have watched my students connect with our SRO time and time again. Does it mean they love all police officers? No. But it does mean that there is one officer that they have a relationship with and can go to when things aren't going well. This is invaluable. I worked with a student last year who had a lot going on outside of school and was guarded and scared. The person that was safe during these times was our SRO. His ability to have a connection at school and then continue that and follow up with the student in ways teachers couldn't was crucial for this student.

Should every police officer be an SRO? Of course not. Should every person be a teacher? Of course not. The selection process for the officers in our schools should be high, just as it should be for all staff in our buildings. Those officers should have access to additional training in working with youth and have the desire to build relationships and work with our youth, just as all school staff should have.

If we decide to remove SROs from our building, we are only serving to increase the divide between police officers and our students. We are sending the message that they only show up when you do something wrong. This is not the message we should be sending. We should be sending our students the message that there is a whole group of people out there that care about them and want to see them succeed. We should be working to build the bridge between our students and the police officers who serve our community and are there to help them when the school is closed. The SRO program can do this.

I believe it would be a mistake to remove SROs from our buildings. Perhaps a clearer definition of their roles is in order for greater transparency. Perhaps they shouldn't wear uniforms in the building. There may be ways to make the program look different and make it even more successful, but I believe the program has a positive impact and is something we should be proud to have in our district.

I am a lifelong citizen of the city and 1987 Central High School Graduate. Thank-you for this opportunity to speak. I commend you for all the good choices you make every week for our schools. I feel we have one of the best school districts in the state and know a lot of what happens in our schools is because of the great staff, administration, and school board. I am however very concerned about the topic of removing SROs (Student Resource Officers) from our school.

I have two children that have attended Central High School. They have both helped me with this presentation. --- is a 2017 graduate of Central High School and --- is a senior. Both have felt good about the relationships they have built with their SROs throughout their school life. Some of----- fondest memories were from her days at Lincoln Middle School. She would tell me of how she could talk with Grummon and Officer Secor when she had test anxiety or some other frustration in her day.

She would just get a pass to go to the office, spend a few minutes with them and go back to class. She felt safe at school. She said the interaction with Officer Secor and Grummon during recess and resource time was a big benefit and she saw the attitudes of the students change. She has also seen this transformation at the Amie L. Mathy Boys and Girls Club. When some kiddos interact with the officers daily, a trust develops. They don't want to have to face that officer and don't want to let them down. Attitudes improve, swearing diminishes and there is more cohesiveness and acceptance amongst the kiddos. At Central, ----- has told me there are many fights and intense issues at every day. She says she would not feel safe at school if there wasn't an SRO. She is grateful for what Officer Gilliam does, how he interact with the students and is there to handle the tough stuff to allow the teachers to focus on teaching. She also says Officer Gilliam, helps with giving students, including one of her friends, the confidence to stay in school and not be truant.

My son ----- has autism, anxiety issues and other mental health issues. He is very high functioning, but struggles with social skills, verbal skills and sometimes making the right choices. In third grade he had an issue in speech therapy. One day a student did something he didn't agree with and the teacher didn't know how to help----- to understand. She kept badgering him for answers to explain why he acted out and she got him so upset that he punched her in the stomach. She pressed assault charges against ----. Gratefully that horrible situation turned into something good because ----- finally was admitted into the La Crosse County Mental Health Support System and assigned to a social worker to get the help he needed. If an SRO officer had been at Emerson at that time, the situation might have been different.

At Central, ----- made a connection with officer Rick Pfennig within the first couple of weeks of his freshman year. Officer Pfennig was always there to help solve issues when -----was being bullied and also help him to understand situations because of his lack of social skills. Because Officer Pfennig was in the hallways, he would sometimes notice when ----- was having a tough day. He would pull him aside, cheer him up and relieve his stress by talking about ----- favorite things, cows, the family farm and tractors. -----would calm down and be ready for the rest of his day without an incident. He also came to our house a couple of times to pick ----- up and take him to school when his anxiety got the best of him.

SROs take their jobs very seriously and are totally committed to these students. In December 2016. ----- got up to go to school and became non-verbal. He struggled and went to lay on the couch and refused to go to school. He got very upset with me to the point I was scared and threw the remote control at the television breaking the screen. I called school to explain that ----- was late and why. Officer Pfennig met us at school to help -----into school as he had done many times before. Officer Pfennig talked with - -----to find out the situation of the morning. Because of that conversation Officer Pfennig called me to explain that he had to place----- on a 72 hour domestic situation hold and charged with criminal damage to property. Officer Pfennig spent all day trying to contact ----- social worker and work out a plan to keep -----out of jail. He even gave me his personal cell phone number to contact him. It unfortunately didn't happen, and he called me after he left ----- in solitary confinement for the night. Officer Pfennig was so compassionate and was even crying. He was so upset by what he had to do. He was there to support ----- at his hearing the next day. I later found out that ----- had issues and threw the remote because he had a migraine headache and wasn't verbally able to explain because of his delayed thought processing issues. Officer Pfennig was there to support our family and I will be forever grateful to him for his concern and compassion for ----- and every student at Central High School.

My husband, -----is a school bus driver and has needed the support of the SROs on several occasions to deal with the inappropriate behavior of students on the bus. One day he worked with a SRO because a middle school student on his bus had a knife and planned on taking it into school with him.

Our kiddos are growing up in a tough world. To relieve stress, they feel the need to smoke joints and vape just outside the Travis Street doors of Central High School between classes. I witnessed leaving the

school after donating blood for the school blood drive. They haven't learned the values of respect, compassion, understanding, and trustworthiness or morals and right from wrong. They are floundering in our community trying to figure out themselves, find friends and a place to belong. They come home to empty houses or non-caring parents that don't interact with them on a daily basis. There are no Sunday family dinners or daily discussions on the events of their day. There is hostility, racism, bullying, feeling picked on, and violence. There is little desire to talk things out and compromise.

The SROs are in our school to create that buffer between school and the world our students live in. They teach important skills that kiddos don't learn at home. They create bonds and help kiddos feel safe. I as a parent feel better sending my children to school knowing there is a SRO there. The teachers are allowed to teach and the classrooms of students are allowed to learn when someone else is assisting a student with an issue.

Please do not remove Student Resource Officers from our schools. They do so much good and are so necessary.

However, I want to make sure I share my thoughts with you both, highlighting my main concerns/viewpoints. I feel it is important to share that I am 100% in support of SRO's in the schools as a parent and a school district employee. I would not feel comfortable at the high school/ middle school level without them.

- Dr. Engel, the paper quotes you as saying that "more black students are suspended at schools with resource officers." However, at our local schools, SRO's aren't the ones to issue suspensions. The suspensions come from the administration. I don't see how these numbers will change, when the admin has the final say, and are the ones who do the suspending. In fact, Officer Graves is the one making sure the student gets home safe, after they are suspended.
- Unfortunately at LHS, the students who are choosing to make the wrong decisions, and not follow the rules, happen to be a higher percentage of students of color. From my viewpoint in the main office, no one is singling those kids out. They have chosen to put themselves in that position. From my observation: Officer Graves doesn't walk around the school looking for students of color. These students are choosing not to follow the school rules. What you don't see are the number of situations he "de-escalates" on a daily basis, that don't become data or numbers for our district. The numbers would be staggering.
- Our SRO and the admin at Logan work extremely hard to help students succeed. Officer Graves goes above and beyond, helping students stay out of trouble. One example is a student (of color) kept parking illegally in the parking lot. After a handful of days of talking to him, instead of writing tickets, Officer Graves got to the bottom of the issue- He couldn't afford a parking pass. Instead of writing a ticket, Officer Graves paid me for the pass with his own money. He didn't want anyone to know. He told me to call the student down, and give it to him. This alleviated any issues, such as issuing tickets. If an outside officer was called, tickets would most likely have been issued each day on that student's windshield.
- There are a handful of LHS students who are behind the "not feeling comfortable with SROs" movement. I would like to point out that those same students happen to be ones that are cause problems at school protesting, not listening to rules, or respecting adults in our building. They choose to disobey rules, and it leads to the SRO having to interfere. This is the same SRO that they come in the office to talk to when they are having a "bad day," are hungry, need a "charge" for their phone, need a backpack, etc. Officer Graves goes above and

beyond to bond with these students on a weekly basis. He uses his own money to feed them when they are hungry. I've seen him buy "see through" backpacks with his own money, in bulk on Amazon, and gives them to them when they get in trouble for carrying regular backpacks and can't afford backpacks. He gives them chargers to charge their phones, so they can call their rides after school, or walk him knowing they have a way to call for help if needed. He's there for them whenever they ask or are needed. I'm shocked that they are treating him with disrespect now. Because that is not what their relationship is like when school is in session.

- I worry about what would happen if we didn't have our SRO in the building. To be honest, I am not sure I feel comfortable being employed here without Officer Graves here. Some of the students who are passionate about defunding the SRO, set up "DEFUND the SRO" during our materials pickup at LHS. They came on campus, set up a table at the beginning of our material line, like they were welcoming people to school. They talked about defunding the SRO program to each and every car that came into Logan's parking lot. Our admin could not get them to move to the end of our line. As a parent, and staff member. I felt they should have been asked to leave the property. Our admin worked with them, and tried to understand and help them. Stacy Everson came and could not get them to listen to her or move either. Stacy sat here all day watching them, making sure things didn't escalate. However, these students continued to hold the upper hand in the situation. The last few hours our our drive thru, they played loud music. Some of the music had swear words and the "n" word in it. It was embarrassing! It looked like they were part of the school...like we were promoting it. As a parent and a staff member, I went home disgusted that this group of girls is "ruling" the school. What will happen when we take someone who is trained and qualified to deal with their behaviors out of the building? He wasn't there on those days to help take care of things. The girls pretty much ran the show. As a parent I wonder will it be safe for my children, who are students at Logan? Will it be safe for me to work here? After that specific instance it makes me very nervous.
- Twenty years ago, if kids told an admin to "f-off" they would be suspended. Now days, kids say it to adults in the building, with no regret or remorse. When the discipline starts, If they have issues with anyone, and the way they are handling things, they pull out their phone. I've seen them threaten to call the media, and have witnessed them calling the media. On that spring day in 2020 when kids were outside, trying to get in to protest Black Lives Matter, who would have protected the rest of the kids in our building, if Officer Graves wasn't there quickly? It was a scary, emotional day for us all. One I don't want to relive.
- LHS has 800 kids in it. If you remove the SRO's you are not choosing to protect the majority of the kids at Logan. You are letting a very small group "win" and leaving the rest of us vulnerable. That group of students who wants to defund the SRO's has a track record of not telling the truth. I beg of you to think about what taking an SRO out of the schools would truly look like for our district in the long run.
- Finally, with Covid and all the change and emotions this year, I feel it isn't the right time to have this conversation. If nothing else, table the discussion for a few years down the road. Timing isn't right, and this is a debate that is being lead by emotions, not by facts. Take time to really study the subject over the next few years and revisit it if you must . Do NOT make a knee jerk decision.

Again, I'm writing this letter in support of the SRO officers as a parent, a school district employee, and a concerned citizen. I appreciate you taking the time to read this tonight!

This is only my second year in the district, unless you want to count my 18 weeks of student teaching, three years ago too- but the feeling I had while in this school district is the reason why I moved 3 and a half hours home and then back here- and that feeling was safety. Safety. Safety in my own building, safety while visiting other schools, and safety and a Camaraderie within the community. As a special education teacher, at the high school level, SROs play a very important role in my daily tasks as a case manager, team teacher, and resource coordinator.

Of course SROs are always there to respond to events such as physical altercations or medical emergencies but even within that there is a sense of safety. When we (Special Educators) call down for help in an escalating student situation, our SRO has that rapport and can help de-escalate. If we did not have our own SRO, and the escalation continued, or a fight grew, and we needed to call in the police department we would get the next available officer or the one closest to our building who has little to no experience or education on child development or working with teenagers. There is no rapport there, isn't rapport what helps our students want to learn and to grow? Our careers thrive on the rapport we have with our students.

Our SRO is the mini reality wake up call to some of your students.... Unfortunately high school is a crazy place and our students will test their limits or experiment with substances. Our SRO is available to provide them with appropriate consequences and give them that wake up call of what would happen in the real world if they were caught doing this in the community. Our SRO's have been trained to work with our teenage students, they understand what they are thinking so they can help guide them in the right direction.

Speaking to our students is another great support our resource office provides. I feel that he guest speaks so often, in different courses, that he should practically be an adjunct.

But it is no secret that when SROs are not in our buildings, they may be working street shifts. This is yet another wonderful connection we have and need in our school and community.

Our SRO is that connection to the community, when I had a student come in on Monday morning late, distressed, exhausted and hungry I already knew, thanks to our SRO. Our SRO was able to fill me in with the fact that my student had a police interaction over the weekend- so I Was able to greet the student appropriately and ensure their needs were met.

I remember reading in an email that stats show that some students have a fear of SRO in their school, as a high school teacher here are my observations.... Our SRO helps with those students who have found themselves in hard places and owe times/fines. Our SRO works with students to meet their needed amount of service hours, or helpful reminders of when court dates are, helps them get school supplies or food for the weekend, but most importantly he is a support system, mentor, and friend to our students, both inside and outside of the community.

Our SRO is our connection to the community- our kids can see him on the streets too and feel a sense of safety as well.

Having such a positive relationship with an officer is what our children need, especially those of color! Having that positive relationship inside the building will overflow into the community relationship and connection too. Knowing that our students have that friend, support, and sense of safety both inside and outside of school is EXACTLY what they need.

We need our SROs. Thank you.

I would like to share that I am in favor of continuing the program BUT would like to see a specific and detailed plan for additional training of these officers with regard to mental health, disabilities, and racial bias. I would also be in favor of a shorter contract with specific benchmarks in place to monitor and ensure that this additional training is being done and being actively used within their role to continue improvement. I would suggest bi-annual meetings with the SRO, the district, and parents as "check-ins" as well. A forum to have conversations to address concerns, highlight positives, and how to make the program better.

After reading the Tribune's reporting on the SRO listening session I felt I the need to reach out and share some of my perspective on the issue. I am writing both as a teacher in the district that has extensive experience working side by side with our SRO at Logan High School and as a future parent of students in our school district (my kids are 3 and 1, and it's going fast already- they will be at Summit before I know it!).

I sent a detailed email to the school board members outlining my specific experiences with our SRO program while serving as a coordinator for La Crossroads Alternative High School on Logan's campus for my first 7 years in public education. I will gladly share that email with you if you would like, but I know your time is valuable and you are undoubtedly getting a lot of correspondence on this issue. I would like to instead summarize my concerns about both recent portrayals of the SRO program and of potential unintended consequences if the program is discontinued.

I do not feel like many of the highly publicized voices have given accurate input that we should be basing our decisions on as a district. I put these inaccuracies in two categories: 1) honest, genuine, well-intentioned concerns based on real-life experiences with police or other SRO programs, many times in other communities with different circumstances and 2) dishonest or exaggerated allegations not matching the common experience that their teachers and administrators witnessed while in our schools. With the second group, I fear there are some adults that are pushing talking points in an effort to settle some scores. Social media feedback loops have attracted some voices to the conversation that have found themselves in the headlines of reporting, all while giving some accounts that are rather suspect, or even worse, blatantly and maliciously false. That is highly concerning, as it detracts from the valid concerns of some others who are trying to advocate for meaningful reform.

There are many reasons to demand better action by our police departments in all of our communities. That fact is undeniable. I think that the SRO program in La Crosse actually represents a progressive reform that can serve as a model for police departments, much like the highly successful NRO program they have recently launched. They are examples of community policing. Removing this program would further alienate police from the community in which they work, which only provides for further mistrust and misunderstanding between police and historically marginalized groups.

Finally, I am worried about the practical implications of not having an SRO in our building, and the resulting increase in our students' interactions with the juvenile justice and criminal justice system (once they turn 17). When issues arise in our schools that cannot be de-escalated by teachers or administration despite our best attempts, calls for service will be made. Without an SRO in the building, we have replaced an officer who is familiar with the building (and likely the student) with a shift officer being called in. Typically calls for service give very little detail from dispatchers. When a shift officer is

called, the chances for misunderstanding and escalation greatly increase. There is also a built-in expectation that when an officer is called for service, some action needs to result- a ticket or an arrest. These are exactly the kinds of negative interactions our SROs actively work to avoid with our students.

The data finally provided in the Tribune last week confirms that calls for service at our high schools resulted in a much lower percentage of enforcement actions than calls for shift officers in the community. Removing SROs puts our students at greater risk for negative law enforcement and justice system interactions. It will only take a few of these calls for service to negatively brand our schools as “problem” schools in the area, and parents will respond by deciding to go elsewhere for their education. Those type of reputations are easy to earn and tough to shake, they have lasting impacts on enrollment choices made by our families. In that way, removing SROs could harm educational opportunities of our students by reducing program options via reduced enrollment and funding.

I am fully supportive of changes to the program (I think that increased district input over which officers serve as SROs would be a great change). It is our responsibility as educators to be reflective and to take a hard look at practices in our schools, especially as they relate to student equity. I am concerned however that recent input from the community (and frankly, from people outside of our community) does not accurately comport with the experiences of myself and many fellow staff in our schools.

I appreciate your time reading my concern. I hope that some of my concerns would be considered by decision-makers before any major structural changes to the SRO program are made.

As a former school board member, I have been following the discussion about SRO’s. I did not take part in the forum but am still interested. One student commented that she was afraid of the police after the murders of black citizens from around the country. I understand that but I also know that the police officers in the schools are a good way for that student and others to meet police who are there to help them and get to know the police in a friendly way. It also would be the time for all students to be able to understand that student’s feelings better. It would seem that having SRO’s in our schools is the best way for all students to get to know the police in our community.

I would like to respond to the invitation for comment on the SRO (school district-police department) program. Please consider keeping the SRO program fully functional while evaluating it for improvements or substitutes. This is not the time (in my opinion) to cut back on this program that has a focus on school and student safety. Instead, this is the time to circle back and press on toward a fresh vision for education in a safe environment.

1) School security and school safety are interconnected. As a medical doctor I have some experience with hospital security and safety and yet perhaps there are correlations to an educational environment. When caring for individual patients at times that have threatened to do imminent harm to themselves or others, I have truly appreciated assistance from community police officers and trained security personnel. As we have seen, violent activities are reported to have increased in many Midwestern cities this year. Therefore, attention to school security continues to be a paramount priority to give our students a stable learning environment. Sadly, we as a society have learned anew that violence can spiral out of control far too quickly. That law enforcement personnel in

La Crosse have partnered with well-trained educators is a bonus to this community. These well trained men and women can continue to make great contributions to safe and secure school environments. You and your team know far more about this topic than me. Suffice it to say that there are multiple strategies to promote peace and it takes a team to make this happen.

2) My wife and I have children in the La Crosse School District. We have learned that the SRO personnel have track records of compassion as well as firmness. We at times have been concerned about teacher and student safety when learning of some unruly behaviors that have happened at our childrens' schools. I don't have data, but the students with problematic behaviors seem to be outnumbered by far by the students who truly want to listen to the teachers and learn. Screening for weapons and responding to physically violent events in school does take teamwork. As an example, we heard that at Lincoln Middle School the school officer's friendly dog "Grommit" was very well liked until 'retirement.'

3) Yes, problems have happened with SRO processes. From my limited perspective, these are not reasons to abandon the values of school security and safety. Please bear with me for a football analogy. When a wide receiver drops the ball, the solution is not to eliminate all wide receivers.

4) Many in our community are looking forward to in-person education. And many folks are coping with frayed nerves related to all the excitement so far in 2020. There may be some glitches for students to 'get back' to classrooms. All them more reason to keep paying attention to safety in schools. Please consider keeping the SRO program fully functional for the rest of this school year, and perhaps longer.
