

MMSD BOARD PRESIDENT STATEMENT ON REMOVING SROs FROM HIGH SCHOOLS:

Considering the incidents of racial injustice that our nation has recently experienced, and as MMSD continues planning for the reopening of schools this fall, I recommend that the Board of Education incorporate a strategy of options to remove School Resource Officers (SROs) from our school buildings.

The complexities of these times have lasting and painful memories for our students and staff, and we must press harder to dismantle systems that perpetuate racism and create new structures, void of harmful inequities, and with the wellbeing of every student at the center.

While I know first hand that our Madison Police Department (MPD) SROs have provided our schools and students many benefits that have built trust and relationships, I also feel the culmination of these racially motivated events have served to increase the emotional and psychological impact that having SROs in our schools has on our students, especially students of color. As a result, we owe it to them to pursue a viable alternative to SROs in our buildings.

Due to COVID-19 related closures, the district's contract with MPD is currently paused. Moving forward, we will establish a board of education sub-committee, including students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders to begin work on a comprehensive review of what MMSD's safety and security strategy could look like without SROs in schools.

The work of this sub-committee will be grounded in developing strategies of prevention and mitigation, and reimagining our partnership with MPD who will continue to play an important role in our response to incidents occurring in our schools. Subsequently, the board will be meeting to review the current MPD contract and how we will be working with them in the future.

Additionally, the voice of our teachers and staff is very important to me. It is with faith that I rely on MTI to represent that voice effectively, therefore I support their recent call for the removal of SROs and evaluating resources needed to best support our students and staff.

Across the country, the use of SROs in schools has been widely debated, resulting in many different approaches on how SROs are utilized. Today, I see an opportunity for change, and reinventing our approach so that we continue to achieve our goal of providing safe, welcoming learning environments for all.

Sincerely,

Gloria Reyes,
Madison School Board President