

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

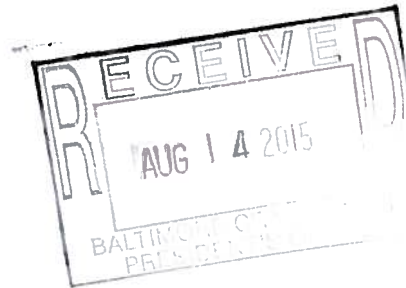
Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Marnell A. Cooper
Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners

Gregory E. Thornton, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

August 14, 2015

The Honorable Bernard C. "Jack" Young
President, Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202



Re: Position Statement
City Council Resolution 15-0231R

Dear Council President Young:

On June 1, 2015 the Baltimore City Council introduced the above-captioned bill (Resolution), concerning a discussion of the process for improving the relationship between the Police Department and the youth of Baltimore, and to explore reinvigorating the "Officer Friendly" program. This statement will summarize the programs utilized by the Baltimore City School Police to maintain and improve relationships with our students and communities.

School police have demonstrated an officer-friendly approach through various engagement efforts over the past several years. The department's primary mission is ensuring that all students and staff are safe to teach and achieve academic success. In support of that mission, school police make every effort to engage with students, staff, parent and community stakeholders on matters of safety within our learning communities and the City of Baltimore.

Presently, school police operate several community policing initiatives within the department, including classroom programs in which officers engage students on positive behavior, with a focus on police and community relationships. More importantly, officers emphasize the importance of students being positive influences in the home, classroom and the community. In addition, school police provide several proactive and engaging programs within the department that align with the community policing model nationally.

- **GREAT Gang Resistance Education and Training** is a longstanding program taught by school police officers throughout the school district; currently, officers conduct classroom instruction in six schools. School police also support the New Psalmist Baptist Church with the Dare to GREAT Summer Camp for approximately three weeks every year, as well as sponsoring their own two summer camps at Charles Barrister Elementary school.
- **The DARE Program Drug Abuse and Resistant Education program.** School police officers currently teach this program in two (2) schools during the school year, to further engage students in support of positive policing and community interactions. The focus of

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this program is to develop student charters while emphasizing the importance of staying drug-free. Equally important, the program seeks to engage students in policing and communicate that school police officers are friendly adults who care about their well-being.

- **The GEMS Program (Girls Expecting More Success):** This program focuses on female character development for at-risk girls. GEMS is a longstanding mentoring program which has been in existence since 2007, and led by Officer Betty Covington. This summer the program received funding from the Family League to sponsor a summer camp at Vanguard Middle School. The summer program was an excellent success step, in which the young ladies greatly benefited from intensive engagement with female officers who guided them in developing great character. This valuable program has also received support from Mayor's Office, the President of the City Council and Councilman Brandon Scott.
- **MBK My Brother's Keeper:** This initiative was launched in Baltimore at a special meeting held at City Schools' district office on the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, and included participation by representatives of the faith community, school officials, and community organizations across Baltimore. This district-wide mentoring program, originally proposed by President Obama, seeks to unite every segment of the community (including police officers) in an ongoing campaign to remove obstacles to success for young men and women of color.
- **Mentoring partnership** with the Huber Memorial Baptist Church at John Eager Howard Elementary school.
- **Boys United** mentoring program at Westport Elementary Middle School.
- **Inner Project:** is a student-led discussion with school police officers regarding interaction and response to youth in our city. The first training was administrated on August 10, 2015.
- **CASA de Maryland:** This organization provides valuable training for school police on Cultural Competency, with special emphasis on positive interaction between ESOL students and police officers.
- **Trauma Care:** School police officers have received several trainings throughout the summer to better enable them to identify the signs and behaviors of students with emergency mental health issues.

In addition, several school police officers are coaching at various levels of student athletic programs in the school district, including football, basketball, baseball, softball and the BOCCE program. Many other officers volunteer as mentors at schools throughout the city.

Finally, City Schools recently completed a series of seven community conversations at locations across Baltimore to discuss the appropriate role of school police in school safety and in

communities surrounding our schools. School police will maintain and expand these and other programs in our continuing effort to identify and implement initiatives focused on improving their relationship with communities and youth throughout our city.

Thank you for inviting City Schools to participate in this process. We will be pleased to testify further on these issues upon request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg Thornton". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Gregory E. Thornton, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer