



August 15, 2022

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

**RE: City Council Bill 22-0107R
Informational Hearing - School Safety**

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of the City Council,

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) has reviewed Council Resolution 22-0107. This resolution calls for an informational hearing regarding safety in Baltimore schools, current safety measures, and future steps to take to keep students and school staff safe.

In the 2022-2023 school year, MONSE is working in partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools to pilot school-based violence intervention programming in three high schools to promote healthy conflict mediation skills and change community norms about the acceptability of violence. This programming would be integrated into Baltimore's Community Violence Intervention (CVI) portfolio. School-based violence intervention workers will mediate school conflicts and work to develop Youth Ambassadors, who will assist in resolving conflicts that could escalate to violence with their peers.

MONSE's Community Violence Intervention Ecosystem's school-based intervention programming will build youth's interpersonal skills in the areas of communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution and management, empathy, emotional regulation management, and behavioral skills which will create a positive school climate, strengthen youth's problem solving and conflict management skills and strengthen academic performance.

To contribute to the development of healthy conflict resolution skills starting in elementary and middle school, MONSE is making \$234,400 available to community-based organizations for the 2022-2023 school year who provide social-emotional learning (SEL) and development programs. This programming seeks to develop self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making in young people.

Additionally, MONSE will use \$164,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to increase the number of trained Baltimore City Public School System staff, including social workers, psychologists, and counselors, in Mental Health First Aid. The training teaches signs and symptoms of emerging mental health problems and how to differentiate potential problems from typical adolescent development. This funding will support the training of 501 school personnel.

According to a 2018 Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices Report, increases in training around restorative practices and social-emotional learning have coincided with decreased rates of student arrests by school resource officers (SROs).

Efforts to ensure student safety must also consider the realities young people face getting to and from school. A 2021 Fund for Educational Excellence (FFEE) report, "Not in Service: Why Public Transit Must Aim to Serve Students," found that "[m]any students feel a need to be cautious and vigilant while commuting to or from school and to be very aware of their surroundings." The report finds that running more buses more frequently, improving lighting, and building better bus shelters can make students feel safer when navigating transit to get to and from school, especially in early morning or evening hours.

Street harassment is another dynamic that impacts student safety. MONSE has engaged in conversation with the FFEE and Councilwoman Ramos about the creation of a Street Harassment Advisory Board, which would include youth representation with a goal of tackling this issue.

MONSE stands ready to partner with City and State agencies to build on these efforts to prevent violence and promote student safety.

Respectfully submitted,



Shantay A. Jackson
Director, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement

cc: Natasha Mehu, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Nina Themelis, Deputy Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations