



9300 W Stockton Blvd., Suite 205
Elk Grove, CA 95758

March 21, 2025

The Honorable Bill Essayli
California State Assembly
State Capitol 1021 O Street, Room 4520
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Opposition to AB 68 – School Safety: Armed School Resource Officers

Dear Assemblymember Essayli,

On behalf of the **Black Youth Leadership Project (BYLP)** and the students, families, and communities we serve, we write to express our **strong opposition** to Assembly Bill 68, which mandates the placement of armed school resource officers (SROs) in every public and charter school across California. While we acknowledge the importance of school safety, AB 68 fails to address the root causes of school violence and instead exacerbates the criminalization of Black students, contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline, and diverts critical funding away from much-needed student support services.

Concerns with AB 68

1. Criminalization of Black Students & Increased Police Surveillance

Research consistently shows that Black students are disproportionately subjected to **harsher disciplinary actions, arrests, and police referrals** compared to their peers. The presence of armed officers in schools has been linked to increased **suspensions, expulsions, and juvenile justice involvement**—even for minor infractions such as tardiness, dress code violations, and classroom disruptions. AB 68 would only intensify this pattern, further marginalizing Black students and undermining their educational opportunities.

2. Failure to Address School Safety Effectively

There is **no conclusive evidence** that armed school resource officers prevent or reduce school shootings. Incidents such as those in **Parkland (2018) and Uvalde (2022)** demonstrate that the presence of law enforcement does not guarantee student safety. Instead, research suggests that **investing in mental health services, conflict resolution programs, and restorative justice initiatives** is far more effective in preventing school violence.

3. Negative Psychological Impact on Students

Many Black students already experience **heightened fear and anxiety** due to over-policing in their communities. The presence of armed officers in schools can contribute to a hostile learning environment, fostering **mistrust, stress, and trauma** rather than a sense of safety and belonging. Schools should be places of learning and empowerment, not institutions of surveillance and control.

4. Misallocation of Funds & Resource Prioritization

AB 68 places an **unfunded mandate** on schools, forcing them to redirect resources away from programs that directly benefit students. Rather than increasing law enforcement presence, **funding should be allocated toward:**

- **Mental health professionals, counselors, and social workers** to support students in crisis.
- **Cultural competency and de-escalation training** for teachers and staff.
- **Restorative justice programs** that emphasize conflict resolution and community-building.
- **Civic education and leadership training** to empower students in their schools and communities.

BYLP's Position & Alternative Solutions

Instead of imposing a **law enforcement-first approach**, we urge the Legislature to consider policies that **prioritize student well-being and educational equity**. We recommend:

- Increased investment in **mental health services and trauma-informed care**.
- Expansion of **restorative justice practices** to address conflicts proactively.
- Implementation of **peer mediation and mentorship programs** to foster a positive school climate.
- Training for school staff on **cultural competency and implicit bias** to reduce racial disparities in discipline.

Conclusion

BYLP stands firmly against **AB 68**, as it threatens to **harm, not help, the students it claims to protect**. We urge you to reconsider this legislation and instead champion **evidence-based, student-centered solutions** that create truly **safe and supportive** learning environments for all.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss alternative approaches that ensure school safety **without criminalizing Black students**. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [contact information] to schedule a meeting or further dialogue.

Sincerely,



Lorreen R. Pryor
President/CEO
Black Youth Leadership Project (BYLP)

cc: Members of the California State Assembly
cc: California Legislative Black Caucus
cc: Community Partners & Advocates