

## **Reimagine School Safety in Pittsburgh Public Schools**

### **RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, as one of the largest institutions in the state of Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) plays an integral role in shaping the lives of our youth, and thus our future community; and

WHEREAS, the City of Pittsburgh on December 11, 2019, and Allegheny County on May 5, 2020, designated racism as a public health crisis; and

WHEREAS, the Pittsburgh Public School District (“District”) has an obligation to promote the healthy development of each one of its students, which includes protecting them from the impact of systemic racism and violence to the greatest extent possible while they are at school; and

WHEREAS, the District is responsible for all interactions students have with adults in our school buildings in order to promote a positive school climate and a community of care; and

WHEREAS, the perpetuation of the school-to-prison pipeline is incompatible with our goal of creating safe, healthy, and equitable schools for all PPS students; and

WHEREAS, more than a quarter of a million young people are arrested or referred to law enforcement in their schools each year with increasing investments towards school policing, surveillance, suspensions and expulsions, harsh discipline, and arrests, in lieu of counseling, educational resources, and physical improvements to classrooms and school structures, leading to a ‘school-to-prison pipeline’; and

WHEREAS, many of the incidents that resulted in students being introduced into the criminal justice system at such a young age could have been more effectively addressed by restorative practices, diversion programs, or other community-based services; and

WHEREAS, without data transparency and accountability, it is impossible for the Pittsburgh Public School Board and Administration to monitor school safety policy and practice; and

WHEREAS, the District has a long record of disproportionately suspending, expelling, involuntarily transferring and arresting Black, Brown, and Disabled students, thereby involving them in the criminal justice system while students lose important time from the classroom; and

WHEREAS, District School Police Officers (SPOs) have the power to arrest and issue summary citations even though they are unarmed; and

WHEREAS, student arrests continue to be utilized for minor offenses where alternatives exist; and

WHEREAS, from the 2015-16 school year through the 2019-20 school year, PPS students were arrested by School Police Officers over 2,500 times, with the vast majority, about 80% each year, being Black students even though Black students made up 52% of the enrollment in PPS thereby introducing them to the criminal justice system and inflicting trauma; and

WHEREAS, even though total student arrests in PPS have decreased since the 2015-16 school year, the proportion of arrests for Black students has not decreased; and

WHEREAS, from the 2015-16 school year through the 2019-20 school year, an average of 37% of the total student arrests in PPS are for disorderly conduct, a highly discretionary offense that is subject to implicit and explicit bias; and

WHEREAS, about half of PPS arrests of Black students (54% for Black girls and 42% for Black boys) in 2019 ultimately resulted in a charge of disorderly conduct (compared with just 10% and 20% of PPS arrests of White girls and boys respectively); and

WHEREAS, the PA School Code 24 P.S. 13-1301-A, et seq requires school districts, even when they employ their own police force, to notify local Law Enforcement within the territorial jurisdiction for certain offenses; and

WHEREAS, the PPS Division of School Safety, Manual of Policies & Procedures, adopted on June 21, 2017, assigns the School Police Officers (SPO) the duty and responsibility to “patrol inside and outside areas of their assigned facility to prevent and/or eliminate potentially dangerous conditions. Areas of patrol inside the school building include hallways, restrooms, stairwells, etc.”; and

WHEREAS, having SPOs patrol inside school buildings exposes Black, Brown, and Disabled students to police contact and increases their chance of being criminalized; and

WHEREAS, the 2020 Pittsburgh Public School District Budget allocates over \$7.2 million dollars on the Pittsburgh Public School District Safety Department; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Pittsburgh Public Schools Board of Directors demand the following actions for transparency and accountability of student interaction with police and the criminal justice system, no later than October 1, 2020:

1. School data, as is required to be collected for the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (CRDC), for 2015-16 through the 2019-20 school years and future years, posted on the PPS website. This includes the following information:
  - a. Total number of non-identifiable students arrested in each school (disaggregated by arrest charge, race, sex, disability-IDEA, disability-504 only, LEP).
  - b. Total number of non-identifiable students referred to police in each school (disaggregated by race, age, sex, disability-IDEA, disability-504 only, LEP).
  - c. Total number of non-identifiable students issued a summary citation in each school (disaggregated by arrest charge, race, sex, age, disability-IDEA, disability-504 only, LEP).
2. The Administration will present the above information each month to the Board in a publicly held meeting so that the Board and community may monitor referrals to police, arrests, and citations.

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that Administration, along with the Safety and Operations Committee, convene an ad-hoc community-majority Task Force to Reimagine School Safety, no later than October 1, 2020, to address the following and provide recommendations to the Board by March 1, 2021:

1. Conduct deep listening sessions with school administrators, teachers, parents, and students that have School Police Officers (SPOs) assigned to their school building in order to identify and prioritize their needs in supporting their students, school safety, and school culture and climate;
2. Conduct a full review of the School Safety Manual including the role of SPOs and SSAs, and school safety practices;
3. Define "School Safety" in terms of building positive school cultures and climates;
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of current school safety practices;
5. Recommend strategies for enhancing student safety and well-being through additional social/emotional supports, mental and behavioral health services, restorative practices, and other supports to meet students' developmental needs.

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that In lieu of referrals to law enforcement, students shall be referred to a restorative program except in instances where calling the police is required by state law.