December 18, 2018

Portland City Council

1221 SW 4th Ave

Portland, OR 97204

Portland Public Schools

501 N. Dixon Street

Portland, Oregon 97227

Dear Portland City Council and Portland Public School Board,

As a coalition of over 100 organizations in 27 states—including the Portland Parent Union—the Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC) is writing to urge you not to pay the Portland Police Bureau for armed police officers to patrol Portland Public Schools. The DSC is a coalition of youth, parents, educators, advocates and researchers working to create safe, supportive and positive environments in schools. We have learned through research and experience that police do not create real safety in schools and that they have devastating consequences for students, especially students of color.

Police do not contribute to positive, nurturing environments in schools and there is no evidence that they increase safety. Research shows that the most effective way to promote safety is to build strong, positive relationships between students and school staff to identify root causes underlying violence and utilize skills and resources to support students to address conflict, bullying, or other issues.

Having entrances and halls monitored by supportive school staff (like community intervention workers and peace builders) who know the student body well can preemptively address issues as they come up, intervene as conflicts arise, and quickly identify when something is wrong that requires an emergency response. Students deserve trained mental health professionals, [counselors and wrap-around services to give struggling students support](https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/SAFETY%20IN%20CPS.pdf), and keep students who may need interventions from falling through the cracks. [Social and emotional learning](https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Ten-Key-Ideas-for-Social-Emotional-Learning-School-Climate-Occtober-2016.pdf) and [restorative justice](http://www.teachersunite.net/sites/default/files/DSC-NY_CaseStudyVol.III_2015.pdf) teach young people how to manage their emotions and [respond to conflicts in healthy ways](https://www.alternativesyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/itf_robeson.pdf). Instead of spending scarce resources on armed police officers, Portland Public Schools should be investing in these proven practices.

On the contrary, investing in armed police in schools will increase the criminalization of students of color and can lead to tragic consequences. [Students of color](http://www.youth4justice.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/04-01-13YouthofColorResponsetoSchoolShootingsFinalStatement.pdf), especially Black students, are arrested at higher rates in schools, and students are already facing violence from armed and unarmed law enforcement in their schools, [including fatal](https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/07/police-school-resource-officers-k-12-misconduct-violence/) and [life-threatening](http://abcnews.go.com/US/officer-shoots-student-high-school-reno-officials/story?id=44045960) injuries. When police are in schools, [they also tend to inappropriately get involved in school discipline](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2577333), escalating incidents that should be resolved by the school into involvement in the criminal justice system. Having police in schools and [punitive school cultures](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/073401680302800208) makes it less likely that students [will trust adults in the building](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c351/92257aeec9a16bc3699aac59006e5723fff5.pdf) to come forward with concerns they may have.

The Dignity in Schools Campaign has released our Counselors Not Cops Policy Platform outlining recommendations for how to create safe and supportive environments in schools and to limit the role of police. We encourage you to review and implement these recommendations available at <https://tinyurl.com/y9bu32km>.

We urge you *not* to invest $1.2 million a year for police in schools and instead to invest those resources in needed staffing and services for students that will create truly safe and supportive environments for learning. If you have any questions please contact Tafari Melisizwe at tafari@dignityinschools.org.

Sincerely,

Dignity in Schools Campaign

www.dignityinschools.org