

From: Shel Gross <shelgross3@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, March 2, 2023 2:39 PM

To: Rep.Kitchens <Rep.Kitchens@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Dittrich <Rep.Dittrich@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Hong <Rep.Hong@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Baldeh <Rep.Baldeh@legis.wisconsin.gov>

Subject: Opposed to AB69

Dear Assembly Education Committee Chairs:

Being unable to make a committee hearing scheduled today for a bill that was introduced on Monday I wanted to write to express my strong opposition to Assembly Bill 69 which would require schools to hire police (School Resource Officers/SROs) if they report more than a certain number of "incidents" in a school year. My opposition is based on the following:

- Police do not make schools safer. Tina Hogle, who for seven years was the statewide coordinator for the Wisconsin School Resource Officers Association, testified to the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) Board of Education (11/15/2021) that "there is NO evidence that SROs make schools safer, there is NO evidence that SRO are best equipped to deal with challenging behaviors..." (emphasis hers). The American Civil Liberties Union found that "there is little to no credible evidence that [police] increase school safety and instead undermine school climate and criminalize students."
- According to the reports filed by SROs that served in Madison high schools in 2016-2017 SROs were physically present when incidents occurred less than 1/3 of the time and less than 50% of the incidents they reported were on school grounds.
- According to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Black students represented only 9% of public school enrollment in Wisconsin during the 2018-19 school year, yet represented 20% of students referred to law enforcement and 31.6% of school-based arrests. In Madison, 86% of the arrests made in or near MMSD high schools were Black people even though Black students make up only 19% of the student population.
- The bill would provide partial, and decreasing funding over three years, for support of new SROs, meaning that this will become an unfunded mandate on already strained school district budgets.

We do need more adults in the schools but these adults should be teachers and mental health professionals. Significant teacher shortages are straining the existing teaching staff and undermining our ability to provide our youth with a good education. Despite the well-publicized fact that increasing numbers of students are demonstrating signs of depression and anxiety, most schools have well under the number of pupil services staff (counselors, social workers and psychologists) recommended by the American Civil Liberties Union.

I urge the Legislature to work with Governor Evers to use the 2023-2025 budget to address the need for teachers and school mental health professionals.

Thank you,

Shel Gross
145 Jackson St.
Madison WI 53704

From: XOCHITL QUINONES <xquinones@wisc.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023 11:27 PM

To: Rep.Hong <Rep.Hong@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Binsfeld <Rep.Binsfeld@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Dittrich <Rep.Dittrich@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Kitchens <Rep.Kitchens@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Wittke <Rep.Wittke@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Wichgers <Rep.Wichgers@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Shelton <Rep.Shelton@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Andraca <Rep.Andraca@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Mursau <Rep.Mursau@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Duchow <Rep.Duchow@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Rozar <Rep.Rozar@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Penterman <Rep.Penterman@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Considine <Rep.Considine@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Myers <Rep.Myers@legis.wisconsin.gov>

Subject: Opposition to AB 69

Members of the Assembly Education Committee,

My name is Xochitl Quiñones, and I am writing to you as a concerned resident of Wisconsin. As members of the Assembly Education Committee, I am asking you to vote no on Assembly Bill 69.

I oppose this bill because as a person of color who grew up being overpoliced in a low-income area, I have direct experience with the anxiety inducing and problematic environment that having police officers in academic spaces creates. There is also already a clear issue in Wisconsin in terms of the rate at which schools call upon law enforcement to deal with students, with a WisconsinWatch.org article from 2021 stating that Wisconsin was doing this at double the rate of the entire nation.

All students deserve to feel safe at school. Threatening students with policing does not make students, faculty or staff safer. From the moment they are trained, police officers are taught to respond to an emergency, not take preventive measures. For these reasons, I am asking you to please vote no on this bill.

Thank you,

Xochitl Quiñones
(so-chee)
she/her/hers

School safety experts suggest the best way to make schools safer and more secure is to adopt a layered approach that incorporates the following four strategies: prevention (including threat assessment and intervention), protection, mitigation (interventions to reduce the after-effects of any incidents that occur) and recovery.

Although armed security personnel such as school resource officers may provide a measure of prevention, they are often viewed as more of a response to incidents. It is important to head off incidents before they happen. In this regard an ounce of prevention can be worth a pound of cure.

Many times, the perpetrators of school violence are the victims of bullying and harassment. Schools need adequate mental health resources, including pupil service professionals such as school social workers, school counselors, school nurses and school psychologists to whom students can have safe conversations if they are being bullied or harassed or know someone who is being bullied and harassed. It is also important to have a school culture where students feel comfortable and empowered to report bullying and other threats so that the work of assessing threats and preparing interventions can function to head off potential incidents. The Speak Up, Speak Out (SUSO) hotline provided by the Office of School Safety has received over 6,000 contacts since its inception, with the highest number of these calls dealing with concerns about bullying and harassment.

Preparedness—rehearsing what to do in the event of an emergency is also important, especially rehearsing what to do in a non-traumatizing way. In addition, there are evidence-based, after-the fact interventions (i.e., after an “incident” interventions) that can reduce the trauma induced impacts of an “incident.” All of these are components of effective school safety and security.

We look forward to working with you in the future on legislation to ensure that schools also have the resources to implement these important strategies as well.

2) Assembly Bill 69 would require all schools to report to local law enforcement any incidents of specified offenses that occur in school buildings and on school grounds. We assume that school officials would report all serious crimes of which they are aware.

There is neither an existing statutory definition of "school grounds" in Chapters 115 through 121, Wisconsin Statutes, the chapters addressing schools, nor is one provided in Assembly Bill 69. We are concerned that the lack of a definition is likely to generate confusion or lead to inconsistencies in reporting and especially in the counting of incidents.

This bill applies to all schools in the state. However, schools are configured differently in different communities. If a school district has its elementary, middle, and high schools under a single roof and an incident occurs on the "school grounds," how does get counted? Would a single "incident" that occurs on school grounds shared by all three schools result in three reports or just one report?

Similarly, if a school district has its elementary, middle, and high schools in separate buildings but located on the same campus or "grounds," would a single "incident" that occurs on those school grounds result in three reports or just one report?

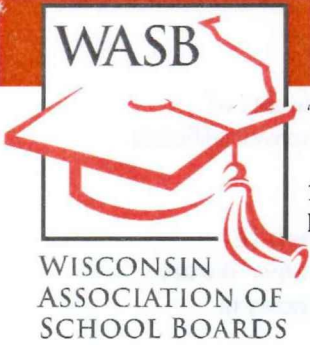
Some statutes refer to "school premises," which is a broader definition that often includes any school building, grounds, recreation area or athletic field or any other property owned, used, or operated for school administration. Because different statutes use different terms, school personnel responsible for reporting may be inclined to consider all property owned leased or rented by the school district to be school property or "school grounds." Others might be inclined to view only the lot on which the school sits as "school grounds." Some clarity would be useful.

Questions that are likely to arise from this lack of definition include the following: Are all properties owned, leased or controlled by a school district used, at least in part, for educational purposes considered school grounds? Would, for example, a school forest be considered "school grounds" because it is sometimes used for educational purposes? To which school would a crime on that property be assigned for counting purposes? Would it matter for counting purposes whether the school forest is attached to or immediately adjacent to the school proper? Would a stand-alone school administrative building be considered on "school grounds"? Would it make a difference for counting purposes whether the property on which the administrative building sits is attached to or immediately adjacent to a school proper or not? Similar questions might arise about athletic or recreational fields or bus garages.

Many public high schools are located adjacent to public (municipal) parks. Because no mail is delivered to these park spaces, they tend not to have addresses. For this reason, police reports may list the school's address as the location of the "incident." Again, we assume that school officials would report all serious crimes of which they are aware. However, for clarity's sake we ask, would public schools located adjacent to public parks be expected under this bill not only to report but count crimes occurring in the park space? If so, to which school would that "incident" be assigned for counting purposes?

3) We appreciate that this bill would make financial resources available to school districts that employ or wish to employ school resource officers. However, we have concerns that this funding would be only temporary and could leave school districts to have to find other resources to continue employing these officers given uncertainty about the future resources that may be available to schools.

Over time, we have seen counties and municipalities ask school districts to assume a larger share of the costs of school resource officers, due in part to the imposition of tighter levy limits on counties and municipalities and little or no growth in state shared revenues. The WASB and school boards would not want to see other local units of government require schools to assume a greater share of the costs of providing school resource officers because of the resources that would be provided to school districts because of the enactment of this bill.



"Leadership in Public School Governance"

JOHN H. ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

122 W. WASHINGTON AVENUE, MADISON, WI 53703
PHONE: 608-257-2622 FAX: 608-257-8386

TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Education
FROM: Dan Rossmiller, WASB Government Relations Director
DATE: March 2, 2023
RE: COMMENTS on ASSEMBLY BILL 69, relating reporting to law enforcement certain crimes and other incidents that occur in or on public school buildings and grounds, requiring certain schools to employ armed school resource officers, and allocating federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funding to reimburse schools for costs of employing armed school resource officers.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) is a voluntary membership association representing all 421 of Wisconsin's locally elected public school boards.

School board members, parents, students, teachers, administrators, members of the public, and the WASB all have a shared interest in ensuring student and school safety. The WASB's member school boards take student safety and security seriously. That is why all public school districts have internal procedures to address student behavior issues, including suspension and expulsion policies, have adopted school safety plans, and work closely with law enforcement agencies in our communities to protect students. Many school districts employ school resource officers, although many smaller and rural school districts do not.

Our main questions and concerns with this bill include the following:

- 1) Assembly Bill 69 would establish a statutory requirement that all public schools report on all incidents described in the bill that occur in a school building or on school grounds, regardless of whether they involve students and regardless of the date or time they occur.

This means schools would likely be required to report on incidents that may occur at times when few, if any, school personnel are present and in locations potentially some distance from school buildings. While school officials are highly likely to discover and be able to report incidents that occur in school buildings, incidents that occur on school grounds may be more challenging. If these incidents occur at night or on weekends or during vacation periods, school personnel may not become aware of them until some time after they occur or may never become aware of them.

We think that the time frames suggested in the other bill being heard today—Assembly Bill 53—provide a more reasonable, although still not perfect, framework. However, we note that we have, at various times, recommended that Assembly Bill 53 could be improved by limiting required reporting to only days when school is scheduled or in session.

Although not an argument against this bill, we note that under Assembly Bill 69, schools would also likely be reporting on incidents involving community members who are not students, including some who may not have any connection to the school. Some of these incidents over which schools may have little or no control, and which may have little effect on student safety or health. We would expect that crimes would be reported if they occur, and we have no reason to doubt that school officials are reporting crimes of which they are aware.



RACHAEL A. CABRAL-GUEVARA

STATE SENATOR • 19TH SENATE DISTRICT

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Education

Senator Rachael Cabral-Guevara

March 2, 2023

Hello, Chairman Kitchens and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 69, an important bill that will provide school districts needed support in hiring School Resource Officers (SROs) to keep our kids safe.

I am a mom of four wonderful kids, one of whom is still in middle school. As we all know, there are unfortunately evils in this world often beyond our control. How we prepare to respond to them can make all the difference when minutes count.

SROs have made an incredibly positive impact in our schools for the districts that could afford them, such as in Appleton. The work that they do extends far beyond the safety and security aspects of their job. They also are counselors, mentors, and role-models for so many of our children across the state.

This bill would provide school districts with the resources they need to hire these SROs, particularly in high-risk schools which report serious incidents to their local police departments. By focusing on these high-risk schools, we can dramatically decrease the severity of both internal and external threats to students. After all, our kids attend school to learn, not surround themselves in potentially volatile environments.

Thank you again for your time. I am hopeful you are able to support this piece of legislation which will boost the safety of our classrooms across the state.

NIK RETTINGER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 83rd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony on Assembly Bill 69
Assembly Committee on Education
March 2, 2023

Chairman Kitchens, and other members of the Assembly Committee on Education, I wish to thank all of you for hearing Assembly Bill 69 today. I'd also like to take a moment to thank my fellow Waukesha County colleague, Rep. Cindi Duchow, for your assistance and support as a co-author of AB 69.

Students and faculty need to feel safe in our schools. This is absolutely essential in fostering an academic environment which allows students to explore and excel in their studies. As we continue to return to normal operations and try to find strategies to correct the notable learning loss and lack of social interactions that have resulted from years of shuttered school and e-learning, safety of those in the classroom and in the hallways must be at the forefront.

Wisconsin and the United States have seen an alarming increase in school violence in the last decade, including a couple of recent altercations in Wauwatosa in just the last 2 months of 2023. According to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel,

“The fights have led the district to work to codify its relationship with its school resource officers and also increase security measures at Hart Park and Trojan Field. Those measures include providing one or two additional school resource officers on site...”

Despite this, school districts in Wisconsin and across the United States continue to remove School Resource Officers (SRO's) from schools or demonize their presence.

According to a survey conducted by the [Fordham Institute](#), over half of teachers in high-poverty schools said that disorderly and unsafe environments in schools make learning more difficult for many students and student behavior problems are a contributing factor.

AB 69 directs schools to report certain incidents that occur on school grounds to local law enforcement. If 100 or more incidents occur in public school buildings or on public school grounds and if 25 of those incidents result in an arrest, the school must hire an SRO by the first day of the following school year.

The bill allocates funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to reimburse school districts for hiring RSO's. Our bill specifies 75 percent of the costs associated with the SRO for the 2023-24 school year, 50 percent of the costs for the 2024-25 school year, and 25 percent of the costs for the 2025-26 school year. While I recognize this will not be the answer to stop 100% of school violence, I believe it to be a reliable common sense first step.

We all want to see this alarming trend reversed. I again wish to thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify on AB 69 today.