Statement from the Spokane NAACP #1137

We at the NAACP Education Committee are demanding a safe and equitable future for our children; paramount to this future is getting police out of schools, divesting from school CRO (Community Resource Officer) programs, and investing in social services such as trained mental health counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists for our students.  
   
If there is conflict in schools, instead of calling the police, our children should be able to go to mediation, talk to a counselor, or watch a video to learn how to reset their emotions. Having mental health counselors and other support staff available to students, instead of untrained policemen who disproportionately arrest children of color is of the utmost importance to us.  
  
Statistically, having mental health services available to children who are stressed or traumatized, especially in low-income districts, has been proven to have positive impacts on school attendance rates, better academic achievement, and higher graduation rates as well as lower rates of suspension, expulsion, and other disciplinary incidents. The data is clear, the presence of school-based mental health resources not only improves outcomes for students, but it also improves overall school safety.  
   
By stark contrast, there is no evidence that CROs present on school campuses improves school safety. Instead, it causes harm, and that harm is caused, disproportionately, to students of color. Last year, for example, in Spokane Public Schools, CROs arrested students of color at over half the rate of white students while these students of color make up less than one-third of the student population. Nationwide, Black children represent 34% of children who are arrested. Parallels can be drawn to understand that the presence of CROs in schools is the first step in the school-to-prison pipeline.  
  
Having CROs in school has been shown to have negative impacts on Black students including lower attendance rates, lower test scores, higher truancy rates, and lower college admission rates. Thus, we need to divert resources from the CRO program to get CROs out of schools and mental health resources in schools.  
   
We are asking you to do the right thing, to invest in our children, and to create a more equitable education system for all children, not just those of privilege.  
   
Thank you,  
The NAACP Education Committee  
The NAACP Executive Committee