



SCHOOL POLICING IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH SCHOOL SAFETY

HB 3 (2023) DOES NOT INVEST IN PROVEN, EVIDENCE-BASED METHODS THAT CREATE SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Texas Appleseed frequently conducts thorough research on the school-to-prison pipeline and hears directly from parents and young people in communities across Texas. Recognizing the pain that comes after a school shooting, our ongoing examination of this issue leads to the conclusion that school policing and surveillance create hardened school environments; these environments detrimentally burden Black and Brown children, LGBTQ young people, and kids with disabilities. To prevent incidents of mass violence on school campuses, policymakers should fund mental health programs and professionals. Such investments will foster supportive spaces for young Texans and decrease the likelihood of another tragedy like the one at Robb Elementary.

CONCERNS WITH SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF HB 3 (2023)



Our primary concerns are with Section 4 on p. 4-5, which would require at least one armed security officer present at each public school campus in our state. We firmly believe that school safety and preventing violence in schools is of the utmost importance. However, decades of research and experience have shown that increased police presence in schools does not prevent school violence or shootings or stop them when they occur.

This proved true during the tragedy in Uvalde in 2022, where the public received disheartening information about the inadequate police response to the active shooter. Instead, the presence of armed police is linked to greater casualties during these incidents. Police presence has also been shown to result in disproportionate criminalization of our most marginalized students, including students of color and students with disabilities, by increasing rates of exclusionary discipline, arrests and criminal charges, and uses of force in response to age-appropriate behavior. Instead of pouring money into the reactive strategy of police in schools, we should invest in preventative strategies that address the root causes of violence, including:

- Relationship-building among students and teachers to prevent conflict, and when conflict does occur, holding students meaningfully accountable for their actions and repairing the harm they caused.
- Mental health supports. This includes hiring more school counselors, psychologists, and social workers.
- Trauma-informed practices to de-escalate situations where a student may be reacting in fight-or-flight mode based on trauma they have suffered.
- Full implementation of the threat assessment process the legislature passed in 2019 so that schools can proactively identify warning signs and intervene with supports and services before violence occurs.

For the same reasons, we are also very concerned about Section 7 on p. 10-11, which would increase collaboration between school officials and law enforcement by requiring the sheriff in smaller counties to coordinate biannual meetings.

- Our other set of concerns is with Section 6, subsection (e) on p. 9, lines 5-14, which would enable the commissioner of education to take action under Ch. 39A, including assignment of a conservator or appointment of a board of managers, if a school district fails to comply with safety and security requirements. This is an antidemocratic, punitive mechanism that has not resulted in true improvements either in Texas school districts or in other states, and we oppose the potential for increased privatization of our public schools that it opens up.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge lawmakers to invest in evidence-based approaches to create positive school climates on campuses across Texas. Moreover, we advise the Texas Legislature to:

- ✔ **Vote against HB 3 in its current form;**
- ✔ **Continually monitor the implementation of SB 11 (2019) and use its robust provisions to address issues of school safety;**
- ✔ **Increase funding streams for restorative practices and prioritize the hiring of school psychologists, social workers, and counselors across Texas to create supportive school environments.**

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