

SRO Public Hearing Comments

May 21, 2020

Name	Affiliation	Comment
Jessica Nordquist	Parent	As a parent in this district, I want us to look at how we define what security looks like.... Does it look like a police car and police person welcoming you at the door or does it look like a welcoming community built through collaboration and connection? For my child, it is definitely the latter. If we were to invest our money in programs and people who build true authentic security rather than a false sense through a badge, we will see stronger and safer school buildings where parents and students feel like they belong. Please consider eliminating SRO's from buildings. Invest that money in our SSO's and training for them in restorative work to build the community and schools and support them. I don't want to have to explain again to my children why their school has a police officer, but their suburban peers do not. That, in itself, tells the story of how we see our children.
Gina Faggiano	Community	<p>Good Morning Sir/Madam,</p> <p>My name is Gina Faggiano. I am sending this as a private citizen but also as a former School Resource Officer. I was the SRO at the Douglass Campus for all of 10 years. In my time there I built relationships with students and staff that are still strong to this day.</p> <p>It is not possible to measure prevention. We will never know the violence or crime we have prevented by our presence in the schools. I do recall one summer when we were removed from summer school programs and ultimately had to be reassigned as the absence of our program overwhelmed the summer school programs with a myriad of issues.</p> <p>I recently, only one month ago received a message from a former student of mine who is now a young adult, that was sexually assaulted. She came to me so many years later to seek my advice and trust in disclosing such a personal and awful experience with me. I also still have close contact with numerous staff members and keep up with the latest news.</p> <p>The year after I transferred out of the SRO program I volunteered for our girls' basketball program in order to stay in touch with the students and staff. My work schedule now simply doesn't allow it unfortunately. Being an SRO was never about 'locking up kids' for me. Yes at times it was the</p>

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		<p>appropriate action to take. For me it was showing the staff and students that the police are there to protect and help them. It gave both an opportunity to have interaction with police when they were not in crisis, which is typically when most citizens have that interaction with the police. Being an SRO was without question the most rewarding part of my 24 year career. I simply ask that you consider allowing the fine officers who are now in this program the chance to continue to make a difference in so many lives. I would be happy to answer any questions or provide further positive feedback on my experience if you feel so inclined.</p> <p>Thank you very much for your time,</p>
SRO C. Sedita	Community	<p>I became a School Resource Office in November 2016. I have been assigned to Wilson Magnet High School since becoming a SRO. During my time at Wilson Magnet High School, I have built great trusting relationships with students, parents, staff and visitors that come in to the building. Those relationships that I have built have expanded into the community. Students and parents have seen me throughout the City of Rochester working. They go out of their way to acknowledge me to strike up a conversation and give me hug. It's a true testament to the trusting relationship when Wilson Magnet High School graduates come back to seek me out to talk and catch up.</p> <p>Being the School Resource Officer at Wilson Magnet, I enjoy doing presentations on numerous topics and educating the students. Teachers have invited me to speak in their classrooms on topics such as cyberbullying, bullying and social media safety, as well as fingerprinting and evidence preservation for Forensic Class. Students that are interested in a career with the City of Rochester Police or other Public Safety careers come to me for information. I provide them with the information they need to pursue those aspirations in becoming a part of the Public Safety community. It is nice to see students that live in the community wanting to give back, by working in the community where they grew up.</p> <p>As part of the Restorative Practice team which is made up of myself, administrators, counselors, student and parents, it is my role to assist in collaborative problem solving. This empowers the student and equips them with the tools to change and grow while learning responsibility and relationship building.</p> <p>Just recently, I had student that I know well go missing. While looking for the student at the Rochester Transportation Center I happened to see the student's mother. Because I had</p>

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		<p>established a great working relationship with this mother and son she recognized me and said “Thank God it’s you Sedita.” The student was located and unharmed. This is one of many instances, why I truly enjoy being a School Resource Officer in the Rochester City Schools. The School Resource Officer program should continue in the RCSD because of the positive and lasting relationships that are established between School Resource Officers, the students and families. These relationships build trust and confidence with the student and help bridge the gap from school to community. The safety and security of the students and school community is the central part of being an SRO but the relationships that are built in the process are essential.</p>
Officer Ken Frisbie	Community	<p>Dear RCSD Board Members,</p> <p>Hello, my name is Ken Frisbie, and I am proudly assigned as the School Resource Officer for Northeast/Northwest Schools at the Douglass Campus. This is my third school year as an SRO, and the first at this school.</p> <p>Throughout my thirteen years as a police officer I have come to fully embrace the Community Policing model. I thoroughly believe to achieve the safest possible communities we need an EXTENSIVE partnership between the community and police. During my tenure I have witnessed a continual breakdown of this partnership, and believe the greatest factor in this breakdown is the lack of communication.</p> <p>Before becoming a school resource officer I was a patrolman, and my day consisted of (as we called it), “chasing after the radio.” I figure during a regular shift I would respond to an average of three calls for service per hour. That’s twenty minutes of attention to what usually amounts to one of the worst days in these citizen’s lives. I longed for the chance to be able to better communicate with citizens, and hoped to improve our relationships.</p> <p>I finally got what I longed for when I became a school resource officer. I spend every day greeting and talking with as many students/staff as possible. I’ve been asked so many questions, and have had the time to thoroughly explain my answers. I am so grateful for this opportunity, and I truly believe I have been able to build bridges that will positively serve these students throughout their lives.</p>

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Officer Ken Frisbie	Community	<p>Dear RCSD Board Members,</p> <p>Hello, my name is Ken Frisbie, and I am proudly assigned as the School Resource Officer for Northeast/Northwest Schools at the Douglass Campus. This is my third school year as an SRO, and the first at this school.</p> <p>Throughout my thirteen years as a police officer I have come to fully embrace the Community Policing model. I thoroughly believe to achieve the safest possible communities we need an EXTENSIVE partnership between the community and police. During my tenure I have witnessed a continual breakdown of this partnership, and believe the greatest factor in this breakdown is the lack of communication.</p> <p>Before becoming a school resource officer I was a patrolman, and my day consisted of (as we called it), "chasing after the radio." I figure during a regular shift I would respond to an average of three calls for service per hour. That's twenty minutes of attention to what usually amounts to one of the worst days in these citizen's lives. I longed for the chance to be able to better communicate with citizens, and hoped to improve our relationships.</p> <p>I finally got what I longed for when I became a school resource officer. I spend every day greeting and talking with as many students/staff as possible. I've been asked so many questions, and have had the time to thoroughly explain my answers. I am so grateful for this opportunity, and I truly believe I have been able to build bridges that will positively serve these students throughout their lives.</p>

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Officer A. Wagner	Community	<p>To whom it may concern:</p> <p>I have been working in the schools for two and a half years now. I am assigned to Edison Tech High School. When I first started I was apprehensive because I was not sure what to expect working as an officer in a school. I wondered how the students would respond to me and what kind of relationship I would have with the staff and administration. I learned quickly that becoming a school resource officer was a great decision. It did not take long before many of the students greeted me with a smile and enjoyed seeing me walking through the building. I have developed a great relationship with all of the administrators at my school as well as most of the teachers.</p> <p>I believe our number one job as a school resource officer is the safety and security for our students and staff. It is important that we create a safe learning environment where the students and staff feel safe. For many students this might be the safest place for them. Next we are to be a resource not only to the student but to the staff as well. This may consist of multiple legal issues both in and out of school. It may just be a conversation with a student who is looking into Law Enforcement or a similar career. I also believe that we need to build and establish relationships with these students. There are a number of students who don't trust the police for multiple reasons. I want each student in my school to know that I have their back and that they can trust me. I have developed multiple relationships with the students during my time here.</p>

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Beth Laird	Community	<p>Dear Board Members,</p> <p>I am a Sergeant with the Rochester Police Department, currently in charge of the Youth Services Unit. However, I am writing to you as a private citizen to express my support of School Resource Officers. My views are my own.</p> <p>The job of a School Resource Officer is hard to quantify. When talking about budgets, one of the first questions is always to ask for numbers. How many arrests were made, how many weapons confiscated, etc. The numbers tend to only express the criminal aspects of the job. The job of a School Resource Officer is so much more. Most of the School Resource Officer's day is spent talking to students and staff. They help mediate issues with students, provide mentorship, and present in classrooms about career development and police/community issues. Having an SRO in the school gives students a chance to have open and frank conversations about difficult topics. I</p>

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Anthony Padilla	Staff	<p>I’m hoping the board is aware of the importance of SRO’S & Security in the School district. I have seen a multitude of incident’s that had there not been an SRO present, a tragedy may have occurred. Safety of student’s/staff is a priority that should be acknowledged and continue with RCSD.</p>
Michelle Sims	Staff	<p>I am in favor of keeping School Resource Officers in the buildings. As a school social worker I hear all day how students do not feel safe in the community, at home and at times in the buildings. With the officers on site this alleviates anxiety and students can keep their focus on learning in the classroom. Often times I see students with PTSD and with the officers in the building they are</p>

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		not triggered because they know they are protected and safe. Finally, unfortunately I work with youth that say they are tempted to create harmful situations here at school but are deterred because we do have the officers in the buildings. Please consider keeping officers in the building for staff, community and of course our students. Thank you!
Dave Cervini	Staff	Taking the SRO out of our school is a mistake. Safety concerns should be of everyone's interest for both staff and students.
Jackie Williams	Staff	I work at Edison Tech High School I do not think it is a good idea to remove SRO's from school buildings just to save a little money. You are <u>putting us all at risk</u> , because at any time a situation can occur with trespassers, parents and students. Faster response would be an officer in the building verses a panic button to wait for assistance. I personally have been assaulted by a student and would prefer police officers in the building. This day and age too much is going on that any help is much needed.
Cheryl M. Graves	Staff	It is very disturbing that in the atmosphere of the world outside you are considering removing the School Resource Officers from schools. School Resource Officers are a <u>necessity</u> and <u>not</u> an option. They are a source of safety and security within the walls of our schools. Students see these officers every day and know they are safe and they are someone they can depend on. Students cannot learn if they cannot concentrate because they are worried about what is happening outside these walls. You cannot have a "do over" in the event the tragedies that have fallen upon far too many schools happens here. Make no mistake – it can happen here. The student's lives in this district are very much worth any money spent on them to ensure their safety and their lives.
Anita Z. Watkins	Staff	I would like to express my concern of eliminating Resource Officers from our buildings. To the outside crowd it may look as though having officers in the building is a luxury. However, as one of the people who has frequent contact with the officers I can tell you they are not disposable. Our adolescents are living so far beyond their intellectual and physical development that they constantly become involved in situations which compromise their safety. Our officers take the time to counsel our young people. Further media purports that there is a divide between law enforcement and the community. Our officers have begun to break down some of those walls

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		through their visibility and interactions. Our officers are involved with much more than law enforcement. Among other things officers mentor, counsel, assess safety and guide staff decisions.
Mike Fuentes	Staff	<p>Dear RCSD Board Members,</p> <p>My name is Mike Fuentes and I work for the “Office of Safety & Security” as part of the RCSD Mobile Crisis Unit. I just want to encourage the RCSD Board to keep <u>ALL</u> School Resource Officers (SRO’s) within RCSD. The SRO’s are an integral part of safety and security within RCSD. Their presence helps deter many potential incidents (fights, trespassing, vandalism, etc.). Not to mention the SRO’s give school staff and students a sincere sense of being safe and secure. Whenever extra RPD support is needed, the SRO’s get the extra presence/support dispatched to their schools very quickly. In my role with the Mobile Unit, I have seen on numerous occasions when afterschool incidents got bad really fast. The SRO’s quickly called in for extra RPD support and they appeared on site within 1-2 minutes! That is what you call extraordinary support for the safety of our staff, students, and community. The SRO’s build relationships with many students and quite often those relationships help gather information to defuse situations or prevent them from happening. These relationships also provide another positive role model for many students. I can’t stress enough how important <u>ALL</u> SRO’s are to the safety & security at all of the RCSD schools they are assigned to. They work closely with School Safety Officers (SSO’s) to maintain a safe & positive learning environment. Any elimination of SRO positions will be a detriment in so many ways to the RCSD family of schools. Thank you for your time! Mike Fuentes</p>
Alan A. Tirré	Staff	<p>To Whom It May Concern,</p> <p>The decision to remove School Resource Officers from Rochester City Schools is short sighted and misinformed. Please reconsider not only the full reinstatement, but expansion of these positions to the Rochester City School District. School Resource Officers are integral to day-to-day operations of our buildings. They are woven into the fabric of student lives while serving as a liaison to our entire school community. The relationships that are forged with SRO’s establish</p>

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		<p>trust, respect for self and others, and shift the negative stigma of authority figures. They serve as role models to our students, they understand the issues that plague our communities, they act a supportive voice to the voiceless, they help students understand the potentially legal ramifications of their actions. SROs create avenues to potential careers in law enforcement which otherwise would not exist. They counsel, mediate, and create lasting friendships. Most importantly, in an age where school shootings have become synonymous with the violation of gun rights, where politicians' inability to act make our children feel like their lives are expendable, SROs keep our schools safe. The moments where I have had to personally intervene in the absence of our SRO have always resulted in personal injury. Cutting these positions will undoubtedly place RCSD students and staff at personal risk.</p> <p>Sincerely, Alan A. Tirré</p>
Antonia Scahill	Staff	<p>To Whom it May Concern:</p> <p>In the short time that I have been at Wilson Commencement High School, I have gotten to know Officer Sedita. To say that she is an integral part of the school community is not doing her justice. Not only does Office Sedita know and have relationships with the students and staff in the building, she knows the surrounding neighborhoods. She communicates occurrences we may not otherwise be aware of in order to protect our students and staff. I teach Forensics at the school and have consulted with her numerous in times regarding questions I have, suggestions for field trips, and ideas to keep our students not only engaged, but to continue to have a good relationship with Officer Sedita as well as the Rochester Police Department. As you are aware, many of our students come from traumatic backgrounds which may have led to a distrust of police officers. In order to continue to build community and respect between citizens of the city of Rochester and the police department, removing Office Sedita and others in the same position would be a huge disservice to all. As educators, we need to demonstrate good problem solving, communication, and decision making skills. We also need to be role models. Officer Sedita does all of this and more. She cares and she is there every day, which is essential for our students to</p>

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		<p>know and observe. Please do not cut this program. We need this now more than ever. I am speaking not only as an educator, but as a parent. Thank you for your time.</p> <p>Sincerely, Antonia Scahill</p>
Michelle Whelen	Staff	<p>I am writing in support of the SROs in City Schools. As a teacher at Wilson Magnet, SRO Sedita's presence is not only needed, but necessary. She has developed a rapport with the students that is unmatched. She has bridged the gap between police officers and students to bring them closer together and create a trusting bond. She has knowledge of community issues that can cause problems in schools and successfully uses that information to keep all of us safe. Many of the students appreciate her presence as it makes them feel secure in the building. Eliminating SROs in buildings would detrimental to the safety of the students, faculty, and staff.</p>
Adele Fico	Staff	<p>To Whom It May Concern:</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to the pending cuts of the Rochester City School District's School Resource Officers. These individuals are integral to our schools for many reasons. I urge you to reconsider a decision that is short-sighted, detrimental, and extremely dangerous to our school communities.</p> <p>We live in an age where children's lives and their safety are constantly being threatened by internal and external sources... the powerful American gun lobby, uncensored social media outlets, widespread incidents of gang and domestic violence, illegal drug use, and child pornography to name a few. The district's SROs provide invaluable resources to help build safe schools and neighborhoods for our kids/families. They serve as role models, teachers, counselors, advocates, cheerleaders, and confidantes. In frequent instances, they bridge the gap between parents, the school administration, and our complex legal and medical systems.</p> <p>Adults are repeatedly failing to protect its most vulnerable population in favor of budget cuts, escalating pressure from local governments, and convenience. Cutting our SROs will only make a bad situation worse in the Rochester City School District. We need these valued professionals to</p>

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		<p>help guide the way for our youth, and to help them learn the importance of self-respect and respect for others.</p> <p>Our children are not expendable, removing the SROs from our building puts them at risk for bodily harm, emotional distress, incarceration, and even death.</p> <p>We need more SROs, not less. Our kids' lives depend on us to do the right thing, and to be the guardians of their best welfare. We cannot shirk our responsibility to them. I urge you to reconsider this proposal. Thank you for your time and consideration.</p> <p>Respectfully Submitted, Adele Fico</p>
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