Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years...The freedom to learn...has been bought by bitter sacrifice. And whatever we may think of the curtailment of other civil rights, we should fight to the last ditch to keep open the right to learn...

~ W.E.B. Dubois, The Freedom to Learn, 1949

70 years after W.E.B. Dubois penned this powerful statement, public schools across the nation continue to fail to protect Black children’s right to learn.

One long overdue step in the journey to ensure Black Lives Matter at school and Black students aren’t unjustly treated is to end the presence of police in schools and redirect funds spent on policing to staff and programs that support student safety, well-being, and development.

Stand for Children stands firmly in support of The Advancement Project’s position that police have no place in U.S. schools.

“Attending school shouldn’t be a constant reminder that you are being watched and one day may even be hurt by the very people staffed to make our schools safe. We should not feel police breathing down our necks every time we walk in the halls, cafeteria, or to and from school. Staffing police in schools is causing more anxiety than relief. Instead, this same money should be used to enhance services in schools especially those schools that are now underfunded.”

- Ashleen Nair, College Student and Community Activist
School policing is inextricably linked to our nation’s longstanding pattern of oppressing and criminalizing African Americans based on the toxic myth of Black male dangerousness, the prejudiced presumption of Black male guilt, and the racist notion that Black people need to be controlled.

Evidence is overwhelming that the presence of police or School Resource Officers (SROs) results in Black students being disproportionately arrested and treated more harshly than white students even though there is no evidence to support that Black students exhibit higher rates of misbehavior.\(^1\)

In fact, police presence on campus can initiate, rather than mitigate, misbehavior by alienating students and result in conflicts escalating rather than being diffused. Further, for Black students, the presence of police on campus can create anxiety and fuel a negative self-concept that impedes learning and healthy development.

“\textit{I taught at predominantly African American middle schools and high schools with school resource officers and saw first-hand how they escalate and even instigate conflicts and too often treat students like criminals. If there’s a school resource officer at a campus, I guarantee you there are some teachers who will not hesitate to call them on kids. There are mindsets that must be shifted and I think it starts with removing resource officers from campuses as a tool for teachers who don’t want to or don’t know how to build relationships and mutual respect with kids.}”

- Former Colorado and Texas Teacher

Billions of dollars have been spent on school police in the past decade while school counseling and health services have been dramatically reduced. 1.7 million students attend schools that have police but no school counselors, and Black students are three times more likely to attend schools with more security staff than mental health personnel.\(^2\)

For many years, alongside many civil rights advocacy groups, students have been demanding school districts end policing to break the school-to-prison pipeline and invest in solutions that create true safety in schools. Recent high school graduate and aspiring educator Gabi Masmela expressed this sentiment during a recent Black Lives Matter protest in Seattle:

“\textit{There is no one way to feel safe, and if we continue to believe that the justice system, rooted in systemic racism, can create a sense of authentic safety in our schools, then we are failing our students! Change starts with youth. We need schools to be safe for all of us so that we can build the future we want to be in and to give our own children someday.”}

- Gabi Masmela

It is time for every superintendent and school board member in school districts that still allocate scarce resources to school police to take an important step on the journey of valuing Black lives equally by **ending school policing and redirecting funds to:** (a) guidance and mental health staff and (b) training to increase educators’ ability to build trusting relationships, de-escalate conflict, and build healthy and anti-biased school cultures.

We ask that you meet this defining moment and follow the lead of Minneapolis Public Schools and Portland Public Schools and many other school districts by removing police from public schools and redirecting these funds to staff positions and programs that support students’ well-being and growth and make schools safer and more just.

\(^1\) \textit{“We Came to Learn” A Call to Action for Police-free Schools. The Advancement Project/The Alliance for Educational Justice (Sept 2018); And, “Two Billion Dollars Later States Begin to Regulate School Resources in the Nation’s Schools”. A Survey of State Laws (October 2019)}