

## ***Re: Community Response to LCPS Blue Ribbon Panel Recommendations***

**Loudoun County, VA - May 13, 2024:** Our community members have expressed deep concerns about the results of an assessment by the Blue Ribbon Panel that was published on April 25 by Loudoun County Public Schools. While the [panel's assessment](#) recognized LCPS as a state and national leader in the field of school security, the panel also made 11 recommendations it claimed could potentially enhance security in LCPS.

Parents have questioned the process under which these panel members were chosen and also the basis of the recommendations made by the panel. This information has not been provided with the report, and cannot be found on the LCPS website.

It is important to note that the panel consists mostly of law enforcement and other security oriented organizations. LCPS has channels of communication with its many different parent and community groups, such as the Equity Committee, Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee (MSAAC), Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Loudoun Education Alliance of Families (LEAF), and others. None of these different committees or groups were represented or invited to the table where these discussions were happening and decisions on recommendations to put forth to the Superintendent were being made. Furthermore, there were no representatives from the communities that would be disproportionately affected if these recommendations are implemented.

We call on the Superintendent and the School Board to reject these recommendations and reconvene a panel that includes a diverse set of voices in order to ensure that our children's rights, including privacy and fair treatment, are protected, and no measures would enable any group potential for abuse of power when it comes to our children.

Among the recommendations the panel made are an increase in law enforcement presence at schools and after school events, the introduction of School Resource Officers (SROs, who are Deputy Sheriffs) at elementary schools, and the requirement of SROs to be involved in every threat assessment made by the school.

Research has shown that an increase in law enforcement presence in schools does not increase the safety of students. In particular, an increased presence of law enforcement has shown the escalation of non-violent disciplinary issues into confrontations that could result in physical harm or legal consequences. When it comes to protecting students from gun violence, Texas University and the FBI [examined](#) over 160 incidents, including 25 school shootings, finding that none of the shootings were ended by armed officers returning fire. These shootings were typically stopped when the shooter was restrained by unarmed staff or the shooter's decision to stop.

According to the [Center for Public Integrity](#), Black and disabled students are disproportionately referred to police, especially in younger grades. Virginia has the highest rate of Black student referrals and referrals of disabled students to law enforcement in the

country. Virginia also refers children to law enforcement for minor issues at a rate three times higher than the national average, making Virginia number one in the country for these referrals. This includes issues related to freedom of expression and speech, particularly related to minority communities. This raises concerns that the recommendation to involve an SRO with every threat assessment directly threatens those first amendment rights.

The Blue Ribbon Panel's most alarming recommendation is to designate the LCPS Division of Safety and Security as a Law Enforcement Unit. This would allow law enforcement to bypass the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which ensures that certain protected records are kept safely between families and the schools. This would be a clear violation of parental and student rights. We call on LCPS and the School Board to halt all considerations of these recommendations and to identify different community stakeholders when considering any further changes to the Division of Safety and Security.

**Endorsed by:**

