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FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**  
*Celebrating 39 Years of Advocacy & Achievement*

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April 2, 2024

TO: Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath, Chair  
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Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Shimica Gaskins, Chair *Shimica Gaskins*  
Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families

SUBJECT: SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT'S SCHOOL RESOURCE DEPUTY PROGRAM

The Commission for Children and Families (Commission) respectfully urges your Board to direct County agencies to implement the recommendations from the Civilian Oversight Commission's (COC's) October 19, 2023, *Report and Recommendations on Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's School Resource Deputy Program*<sup>1</sup> and to take additional steps identified by the Commission as outlined in this letter.

For the past few months, the Commission has met with representatives of the COC and Cancel the Contract, as well as received input from two school districts, to better understand the use of the Sheriff's Department School Resource Deputies (SRDs) on school campuses in LA County. As you know, the COC and Office of Inspector General (OIG) have submitted reports detailing disproportionate contacts between SRDs and Black and Latinx students. Additionally, research has discussed that the presence of SRDs may be associated with higher rates of exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspensions, expulsions, etc.) and the OIG's April 2023<sup>2</sup> report provided data showing the suspension rates for Black students were higher than statewide averages in schools with contracted SRDs. Moreover, contact with SRDs can lead to students being arrested and cited, especially for Black students. The April 2023 OIG report highlights that arrests and citations for Black youth in Lancaster schools were significantly higher and in one school district served by SRDs, four out of five Black students involved with SRDs were arrested. The Commission is also concerned with data from these reports showing SRD contacts with children as young as ages 5 and 7 as well as contacts with youth with special education needs.

The Commission commends the work that the County has begun on this issue, including the July 12, 2022 Board Motion to enhance school district capacity to protect student safety which led

<sup>1</sup> October 19, 2023. Report and Recommendations on Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's School Resource Deputy Program (<https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/AdHocReport-LASDSchoolResourceDeputies10.19.2023.pdf>)

<sup>2</sup> April 18, 2023 Report Back on Improving School Climate and Safety ([https://assets-us-01.kc-usercontent.com/0234f496-d2b7-00b6-17a4-b43e949b70a2/6e218997-05d1-4bd1-a6aa-6e0573d153c6/Report%20Back%20on%20Improving%20School%20Climate%20and%20Safety\\_Final.pdf](https://assets-us-01.kc-usercontent.com/0234f496-d2b7-00b6-17a4-b43e949b70a2/6e218997-05d1-4bd1-a6aa-6e0573d153c6/Report%20Back%20on%20Improving%20School%20Climate%20and%20Safety_Final.pdf))

to the launch of the School Safety Innovation Pilot as well as the December 19, 2023 Board Motion to create an Independent Process for Complaints Related to School Law Enforcement Services. However, there is much more that can be done to ensure that the County's youth can attend school in a safe and supportive environment, especially for Black and Latinx students.

For these reasons, as well as our shared belief in the County's vision for racial equity<sup>3</sup> to end structural racism and its consequences, the Commission for Children and Families respectfully urges your Board to adopt the recommendations of the Civilian Oversight's Commission's October 19, 2023 report on the *Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's School Resource Deputy Program*.

In addition to the COC's report recommendations, the Commission also respectfully urges your Board to take these additional steps:

1. Adopt specific requirements around qualifications and training of SRDs, including requirements for SRDs to have 1) specialized training on trauma informed care, racial equity, and authentic youth engagement; 2) demonstrated interest in youth development; and 3) the ability to communicate well with youth.
  - a. While the COC October 2019 report calls for requirements for qualifications and training of SRDs to be added to the LASD's SRD program agreements, the Commission believes these specific requirements should be added to the LASD SRD program agreements to ensure that SRDs are prepared to interact with young people on school campuses.
2. Prohibit contact between SRDs with elementary school students and students with disabilities for non-safety matters (e.g., minor disciplinary behavior, non-violent behavior, tardiness, truancy, etc.).
3. Family Notification Protocol

The SRD Agreement should include a protocol for family notification, including:

- a. SRDs who are seeking to interview students must first secure consent from the student's parent or guardian and/or education rights holder, except in cases where the student presents a real and immediate physical threat to students, teachers, or the public's safety.
  - b. Students should have the right to have their parent, guardian, or an adult of their choosing present during questioning and/or interviews.
  - c. If a student is removed from campus or arrested the SRD must notify the student's parent or guardian of the arrest immediately.
  - d. If a student is to be arrested, SRDs should arrest youth in a private location away from other students. Arrests should not take place in a counselor's/psychologist's office.
4. Provide resources to expand and leverage existing programs to eliminate or reduce the need for SRD intervention, such as programs lifted up in the March 8, 2022 report from Office of

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<sup>3</sup> Los Angeles County Racial Equity Strategic Plan (<https://ceo.lacounty.gov/ardi/racial-equity-strategic-plan/>)

Diversion and Reentry's (ODR) Division of Youth Development and Diversion (YDD) on *Strengthening Oversight of School Law Enforcement Services*<sup>4</sup>.

- a. For example, Lynwood School District implemented the Safe Schools Collaborative and developed incident response protocols to address any threat of students' safety on campus. Lynwood USD eventually terminated their SRD contract and reinvested funding into mental health and supportive programs.
  - b. County Departments that serve young people and provide school-based services should work collaboratively to assess existing community-based youth development supports. They should develop a triage protocol to guide County departments, community-based support services and school district decision-making before or in lieu of contacting law enforcement.
5. Trainings for Teachers and School Personnel
- a. County Departments that work with young people and provide school-based services should, in partnership with community-based organizations and post-secondary institutions, develop a specialized training/curriculum to build skills for students receiving their master's degree in education to learn about trauma informed care, racial equity, how to authentically engage youth, and restorative justice practices. These trainings should be anti-racist and include the causes and solutions of school violence as well as how to empower youth. This training should be shared with community colleges, the California State University and the University of California systems, and private colleges to ensure teachers have skills to de-escalate situations instead of relying on law enforcement to provide school discipline.
  - b. This training can build on existing work already created by community partners, such as the Racial Justice trainings developed and implemented by the California Conference for Equity and Justice (CCEJ).

The Commission thanks the Board for its consideration of the recommendations above. Please contact me at [shimicagaskins@grace-inc.org](mailto:shimicagaskins@grace-inc.org) or Interim Executive Director, Barbara Lundqvist at [blundqvist@ocp.lacounty.gov](mailto:blundqvist@ocp.lacounty.gov) if you have any questions.

c: Sheriff  
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Chief Executive Office  
Children and Family Services  
Civilian Oversight Commission  
County Counsel  
Health Services  
Mental Health  
Office of Child Protection  
Office of Inspector General  
Probation  
Probation Oversight Commission  
Public Health

Youth Commission  
Youth Development  
Children's Deputies, Board of Supervisors  
Justice Deputies, Board of Supervisors

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<sup>4</sup> March 8, 2022 Report on Strengthening Oversight of School Law Enforcement Services  
(<https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/170689.pdf#search=%22school%20resource%20deputies%22>)