

**May 6, 2021 Public Hearing on the Draft Recommendations from the
Howard County Racial Equity Task Force (RETF)**

Group Testimony from The Progressive Democrats of Howard County

Good Evening my name is Francis Uy and I am here to provide testimony on behalf of The Progressive Democrats of Howard County (PDHC) and submitted the affidavit to speak on behalf of that group.

Education

In the draft recommendations from the RETF Education subgroup that relate to “*School Resource Officers & Restorative Justice Practices*,” PDHC wholeheartedly supports the recommendation that “the Council should recommend all funds allocated for the SRO program be shifted to full funding support for and implementation of holistic Restorative Justice practices, and Community School Approaches.” The RETF recommendations go on to recommend that “budgetary action (be) implemented in the next budget cycle (FY2023).” We agree that budgetary action should be taken, and PDHC believes that it is imperative that budgetary action be taken this month for the FY22 budget currently under consideration instead of the following fiscal year. In order for, as the RETF recommendations describe, “All funds allocated for the SRO program..be shifted out of the police department budget to Restorative Justice, mental health, and student welfare support programs of HCPSS,” a budget amendment must be filed that fulfills this aim, and it should happen this month.

We would also like to add to the recommendations of the RETF that Council Members and all other Elected officials not accept campaign donations from the Howard County Police Association PAC, or campaign donations from any entity that formally represents law enforcement. For the sake of the work of this Task Force and others, not only should no future donations be accepted from law enforcement agencies, the donations made to current elected officials should be returned. Our organization requests that Council Members Jones and Yungmann return the \$1000 donations they each received (since January 2020) from the Howard County Police Association PAC. We would also like to express our general concern over Elected officials accepting campaign donations from entities that represent parts of County government for which they have budgetary and accountability oversight.

Additionally, as informed by the information listed in the draft recommendations, we want to express our disappointment that the Education subgroup of RETF was limited to only recommending Council Resolutions and not also Council Bills. In both 2019 and 2020, Council legislation that would have extended the wait period for development projects in overcrowded school districts (CB17-2019 and CB1-2020), legislation that clearly and decisively affects HCPSS, did not pass. For CB1-2020, Council Members Rigby, Jones, and Yungmann were the “no” votes. Limiting the RETF Education subgroup to only recommend Resolutions, which have little to no legal efficacy, unnecessarily gutted the scope of recommendations that could be submitted by the group. PDHC recommends that the Council re-consider the aforementioned legislation.

There are undoubtedly many important recommendations and overdue policies that have been brought forth and recommended by the RETF than we have time to elaborate on here, and we appreciate the time and attention given by its members. We will be sure to follow up in writing with additional thoughts regarding those recommendations. Thank you for your time.