



The Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act

Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (MA-07) & Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT)

Co-Sponsored by: Reps. Jamaal Bowman (NY-16), Ilhan Omar (MN-05) & Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Ed Markey (D-MA), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Ron Wyden (D-OR)

Background

The *Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act* would invest in safe and nurturing learning environments for all students and reduce the over-policing of our nation's schools. The data shows that counselors, social workers, psychologists and other trained support personnel significantly improve social and educational outcomes for kids in schools – whereas the presence of police in schools often leads to the criminalization and pushout of students, particularly Black and Latino students, as well as those with disabilities. *The Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act* would prohibit the use of federal funds to maintain police presence in schools and provide \$5 billion in new grant funding to help schools hire more counselors, social workers, and other behavioral health personnel and implement services that create positive and safe learning environments for all kids.

Right now, we are failing millions of children by not prioritizing the personnel and support they need. Fostering safe, supportive schools starts with the people working directly with students. While we know students' social, emotional, and mental health are critical to their success, far too many children continue to attend schools that are woefully under-staffed by the personnel that would be responsible for supporting those needs. In fact, fewer than 10 percent of students go to schools that meet the recommended student-to-counselor ratio of 250:1. Meanwhile, nearly half of all students attend school with law enforcement officers present – including nearly two million students who attend schools with police but no counselors. It is time the federal government focused its resources on providing children with the school-based support system they need to feel safe and succeed.

Bill Summary

- **Prohibit the use of federal funds for maintaining police in schools:** Since 1999, the federal government has spent more than \$1 billion to increase the number of police in schools. However, evidence does not show this investment has improved student outcomes and school safety. This legislation would prohibit federal funds

from being used to hire or maintain police in K-12 schools, diverting that funding toward other uses related to school safety within applicable grant programs.

- **Invest billions to help schools hire counselors, social workers, and other trauma-informed support personnel necessary to create safe, supportive learning environments for all students:** The legislation helps schools build safe and positive learning cultures by establishing a new \$5 billion grant program to support the hiring of counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and other personnel. The grant would also help schools implement programs to improve school climate, such as school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports, and invest in trauma-informed services and professional development. As more schools move away from policies that criminalize students and push them out of school, this historic investment will ensure districts have the resources to provide students with the supports they need to feel safe in school and thrive.