

**Erin Davies, Executive Director, Juvenile Justice Coalition**  
**Testimony on HB 318**  
**House Education and Career Readiness Committee**  
**February 27, 2018**

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 318. The Juvenile Justice Coalition (JJC) is an organization that works to ensure that approaches to Ohio youth who are at-risk of involvement or involved in the juvenile court system are research-based and cost-effective. In addition, JJC engages youth leaders to get their perspective on what would be most effective for them and their colleagues.

Although no data exists on how many school resource officers (SROs) are in Ohio schools, SROs are present in many schools across the state. JJC believes this bill provides necessary clarification on the role of SROs in school districts. HB 318 requires schools to have a memorandum of understanding defining the SRO's responsibilities relative to other school administrators, teachers, and staff, particularly around school discipline. In addition, the bill requires SROs to receive critical training that addresses the unique characteristics of youth, including keeping students out of the school to prison pipeline and youth's developmental characteristics that have been long recognized by law enforcement. Finally, the bill has a welcome provision that allows for student input on the MOU between the school and the SRO. This input from youth on the role of SROs in their school is critically important to ensure that youth – who are most likely to come into contact with SROs – understand and have a say in the role of these officers in their school.

While JJC supports the youth-centered standards that HB 318 establishes for SROs, through conversations with Ohio youth, we have heard an overwhelming need for additional resources in their schools that are not SROs. In order to succeed, the students have repeatedly expressed a need for more holistic, social-emotional, trauma-informed support – including increased access to social workers and mental health professionals – in their schools. All of the youth we work with want to succeed in school, but need help with various challenges and barriers they struggle to overcome. Having a strong support staff would help to identify and deescalate situations early and hopefully reduce the need for any law enforcement intervention – SRO or otherwise. We urge this Committee to take a holistic look at how to provide students with the supports they are asking for to be successful.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and I look forward to any questions you may have.