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From: C. Jay <[mergeourpolice@gmail.com](mailto:mergeourpolice@gmail.com)>

Date: Tue, Feb 22, 2022 at 4:05 PM

Subject: Palm Beach County School District Security Crisis

To: <[governorron.desantis@eog.myflorida.com](mailto:governorron.desantis@eog.myflorida.com)>, <[barbara.mcquinn@palmbeachschools.org](mailto:barbara.mcquinn@palmbeachschools.org)>, <[alexandria.ayala@palmbeachschools.org](mailto:alexandria.ayala@palmbeachschools.org)>, <[karen.brill@palmbeachschools.org](mailto:karen.brill@palmbeachschools.org)>, <[erica.whitfield@palmbeachschools.org](mailto:erica.whitfield@palmbeachschools.org)>, <[frank.barbieri@palmbeachschools.org](mailto:frank.barbieri@palmbeachschools.org)>, <[marcia.andrews@palmbeachschools.org](mailto:marcia.andrews@palmbeachschools.org)>, <[debra.robinson@palmbeachschools.org](mailto:debra.robinson@palmbeachschools.org)>, <[boardoffice@palmbeachschools.org](mailto:boardoffice@palmbeachschools.org)>, <[mike.burke@palmbeachschools.org](mailto:mike.burke@palmbeachschools.org)>

Dear Governor DeSantis,

This letter has been drafted by concerned parents of Palm Beach County School District students along with Police Officers of the Palm Beach County School District Police Department.

Our concern is first and foremost for the safety of our children in the Palm Beach County School District. Secondly for the police officers that work for the school district police department. As you are very familiar, times have changed and schools seem to be vulnerable to violence since they have been a soft target.

We are all proud of what you have done for our children by requiring a police officer in every school. Unfortunately this has been a struggle for our school district. Prior to your mandate the school district Police Department was a struggling police department of approximately 140 officers, which includes the department command staff. The school district police are required to cover 187 schools and the math is obvious, they were not able to cover all of our schools. They have been and still are the lowest paid police agency in Palm Beach County. Creating its own issues with retention and recruitment. (Recruitment has been halted for the last 8 months. If you do your research the only position advertised is for Police Chief) Under Chief Kitzerow's administration it was determined that we need to be a force of 315 officers to safely protect our children.

They have attempted to reach full force for the last two years with no success. In the last 2 years they have been through three police chiefs and are currently searching for their fourth. Each chief has told our board members that they will make the school police department whole and everyone of them has failed. Now we are in a situation with no possibility of success, that statement comes from the police department's administration, Police Officer's and the school district. The common statement made is that the only way to make our schools safe is to immediately merge with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office.

The only opposition to this safety issue is five of the seven school district board members. The reason for this is being said that they don't want to lose control of the police department. Vice chair board member, Karen Brill of District 3 and Alexandria Ayala of District 2 both support the Police Officers. They believe that based on the department's current situation of being understaffed and concerns from the community along with the school district Police Officers themselves that our schools, students and staff are not being properly protected, a merger with the Sheriff's Office is the only way to protect our schools and children.

Our belief is that the school district needs to focus on their job of educating our children and let the law enforcement professionals do their job of which they were trained for, protect our children in all schools.

As of this email the Police Department is understaffed by close to 100 police officers. Currently they have hired multiple local police departments to help cover schools within their city limits. Now they have reached out to the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office for additional help. School Police are in negotiations to contract 20 deputies to help with the shortage of officers to cover all schools. The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office and local police departments are assisting school police with officers but at a great cost. They all are approximately \$100 an hour for each officer/deputy working a school 8 hours a day all year long. Even

with their help the Police Department will still not be close to 315 officers required to properly serve our children. On Friday Feb 18th we are aware that there was at least one school with no officer or deputy on campus directly violating the Marjorie Stone-man Douglas Act and compromising the children and staff member's safety. We believe with further investigation you will find this happens more often than we know.

The required number of officers per student is 1 officer per 1,000 students. Although on paper the appropriate amount of officers are assigned to each school. Requiring many high schools and middle schools to be assigned a secondary officer. Daily through the school year this secondary office is being pulled to cover other schools due to the shortage in staff. Leaving school with over 2000 students to be covered by 1 officer. This is a safety issue for our children and for the officer on campus.

From the top of the Police Department down to the officers in our schools, all of them believe that a merger with the Palm Beach County Sheriff Office is the only way to make our children safe. They would take our current police officers and complete the package covering every school as required by your office. This as you know would be a contract agreement with the school district. Doing this not only would properly protect our children but would be at a cost that would save the school district millions of dollars that would be best utilized on the students' education.

In reference to the officers of the Palm Beach County School District Police Department. . They don't receive the proper training due to the manpower shortage. One main concern is firearms qualifications. They currently are not in compliance with FDLE requirements of qualifying every 2 years. None of the officers have had the required SRO (School Resource Training required to work in schools) The majority of the training they receive has been online through videos. The hands-on training that is needed to be a proficient officer is not being provided.

They are also dealing with a radio communication system that does not work in the vast majority of the schools plus surrounding areas. This puts not only the officers in danger but students and staff. When an emergency arises the officers do not have reliable forms of communication.. The officers and dispatchers use cell phones as the primary source of contact because they know the radios don't work in the schools. However, there are many schools that have very limited areas where cell phones work. This is a scary situation to put our officers in and most importantly our children. Imagine an active shooting situation where the officer can't communicate real time events such as locations, number of suspects, and description of suspects.

School District Police Officers are leaving this department within the first or second year of employment for better pay, better training and better equipment. Along with broken promises that they are working on fixing these issues.

We are reaching out to you hoping you would step in and through an executive order make our schools safe by directing the Sheriff of Palm Beach County to take over police services for our schools.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter. Please let's work together to keep our children safe.

Respectfully

Concerned parents of Palm Beach County Schools and the rank and file of the Palm Beach County School District Police Department.