

August 28, 2026

Barrington Town Council
Barrington Town Hall
283 County Road
Barrington, RI 02806

VIA MAIL AND EMAIL

Dear Town Councilors:

Our organizations are writing you in response to the Council's latest consideration of a request from the police chief to hire a second school resource officer for the school district. Back in February, when the Town Council last began reconsidering this issue, a few of our groups sent you a letter outlining our concerns about moving forward with this plan, and others of us did so when this proposal first surfaced back in 2024. Those concerns remain the same today, and we once again urge you to reject this plan.

For ease of reference, we have enclosed a copy of the February correspondence from four of our organizations. We will not repeat all the points made in that letter, but we urge you to review them as you deliberate on the matter. This letter instead seeks to respond to some of Chief Correia's recent comments about his proposal and our previous opposition to it.

At the Council meeting, the chief argued that disparate disciplinary treatment of students should not be a concern because it does not happen in Barrington. We would be interested in seeing the data being relied upon by the Chief for that assertion. As the February letter to you noted, evidence analyzed elsewhere strongly suggests otherwise. In addition, while we do not have any recent statistical information about Barrington, we *do* know that when school suspension data was analyzed in the years immediately preceding COVID, Barrington's suspension rate for Black students and students with disabilities was alarming.¹

In a recent *Barrington Times* article, the Chief belittled efforts by "outside" organizations like ours to share our concerns with town officials.² But some of our organizations have members residing in your town, and we all have experience in dealing with SROs that we believe is helpful for town officials to hear. The issues that are generated by the presence of SROs in schools have

¹ See Appendix A in the ACLU of RI's March 2023 report, "Still Oversuspended and Underserved: Continued Disparities in Suspension Rates in Rhode Island." In 2018-2019, the Barrington School District's suspension rate of Black students in proportion to their population in the town's schools was the second highest in the state. In 2017-2018, it was the highest. <https://www.riaclu.org/publications/report-still-oversuspended-and-underserved-continued-disparities-suspension-rates-rhode/>

² "Barrington Police Chief on push for second SRO: 'I intend to do more,'" *Barrington Times*, Josh Bickford, July 31, 2026, <https://www.eastbayri.com/stories/barrington-police-chief-on-push-for-second-sro-i-intend-to-do-more,141707?>

no geographical limits and occur in Rhode Island school districts large³ and small,⁴ urban and suburban.

The chief also charged that our opposition serves to “demonize” the police. But raising legitimate concerns about how the presence of SROs can change the atmosphere and dynamics in a school setting and lead to troubling incidents is simply expressing our views based on experience, and is no more demonizing than his comments about us.

Finally, the chief downplayed the basic concern that we and others have routinely raised: that the money spent on SROs could be better expended on such things as counseling and mental health support for students. He stated that it is “not a binary choice” and that the town can do both. But the town already pays for one SRO, and the fact of the matter is that every municipality, including Barrington, has budgetary limits. Money spent on an SRO (or two) is money not available to spend on school counselors or other support.

If we are nonetheless unpersuasive in convincing you to reject this request for an additional SRO, we would like to conclude with a few comments about the MOU. First, we are still deeply concerned that, unlike those agreements in effect in the district before 2025, the current MOU does not require the submission of weekly reports on the SRO’s activities, and also notably dropped a reference to a state law reporting requirement, R.I.G.L. §16-2-17, designed to provide at least a modicum of transparency about SRO interactions with students.

In addition, while it was acknowledged at a recent Council meeting that the MOU is essentially a contract between the school district and the police department, it is worth highlighting that it provides no protection to affected students and their families. If an SRO exceeds their stated role outlined in the MOU and, for example, inappropriately intervenes in matters of routine disciplinary behavior, the MOU explicitly declares that it “may not be relied upon to create any substantive or procedural rights enforceable by any person in any civil or criminal matter.”

All of our organizations work with and/or are comprised of youth, and we too want students to be safe. While we respect the police department’s goal of protecting students, we continue to strongly disagree that the increased use of law enforcement is the right approach.

We thank you once again for taking the time to consider our views, and we remain available to answer any questions you have.

Sincerely,

Chanda Womack

Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education

³ “Pawtucket, ACLU settle lawsuit over middle school student’s arrest,” *Providence Journal*, by Jack Perry, May 28, 2026, <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/courts/2026/05/28/pawtucket-rhode-island-student-awarded-5000-in-lawsuit-over-2019-arrest-at-school/90291860007/>

⁴ “Former Narragansett High School student awarded \$75,000 in assault settlement,” *Rhode Island Current*, by Christopher Shea, April 4, 2023, <https://rhodeislandcurrent.com/2023/04/04/former-narragansett-high-school-student-awarded-75000-in-assault-settlement/>

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cc: Superintendent Holly Hageman
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ENCLOSURE



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February 26, 2026
VIA EMAIL

Barrington Town Council
283 County Road
Barrington, RI 02806

Dear Town Councilors:

This letter is on behalf of the Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education, the American Civil Liberties Union of Rhode Island, Providence Student Union, and Providence Student Youth Movement. Collectively our organizations write to urge the Town Council to reject the proposal to add a school resource officer to Barrington Middle School at its upcoming meeting. Our organizations have long opposed the addition of school resource officers in Rhode Island schools, and our concern is heightened by the Barrington School Committee's stated intention to additionally assign this officer to Barrington's elementary schools.

We recognize that this is probably first and foremost a fiscal, rather than policy, issue for the Council. On that level, we urge the Council – especially when added to the policy concerns expressed below – to reject the use of limited municipal funds for such a use when the money could be expended for much more productive purposes.

Some of us shared our perspective with the School Committee while they were considering this addition, and our concerns remain unchanged. As stated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Barrington Police Department and the Barrington School District, school resource officers are first and foremost sworn police officers, operating under the police department, and not the school district. This distinction serves as a stark reminder that this person is not an educator or support staff, but a law enforcement officer. The presence of such personnel in the school setting can inappropriately redefine normal adolescent behaviors into issues of criminal justice.

We understand that the safety and support of students is paramount, but the presence of SROs offers a false sense of security without fundamentally addressing the root causes of school safety concerns. There is no evidence that school resource officers prevent school shootings, nor are they equipped to offer the social, emotional, and behavioral support that students need and that non-law enforcement school professionals could better provide. While we recognize that some SROs may establish good rapport with students, we firmly believe that students are better served by increased investment in more specialized personnel such as counselors, social workers, and mental health professionals, who are trained to provide that type of support to students.

Despite the fact that school resource officers are discouraged from acting as “school disciplinarians,” studies have shown that schools with school resource officers experience

increased suspensions, expulsions, police referrals, and student arrests.⁵ These outcomes contribute directly to the school-to-prison pipeline and negatively impact educational outcomes. Our concern is compounded when one considers that students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ students both statewide and nationally are disproportionately affected by these harmful disciplinary tactics.⁶

We are also concerned about changes to reporting requirements between the 2024 MOU and the one signed in 2025 and currently in place. The 2024 MOU required weekly activity reports from the SRO to both the Barrington Police Department and the school principal, including detailed information on arrests, police interactions, referrals to the school resource officer, and educational trainings. This weekly reporting is absent from the 2025 MOU. Notably missing as well is an explicit reference to the reporting requirement, under R.I.G.L. §16-2-17, of comprehensive data collection on the use of force against students, arrests and their justifications, referrals to law enforcement or court services, and other disciplinary actions involving students.

Instead, the 2025 MOU limits reporting obligations to the cost of the school resource officer, a description of the proposed mental, social, or emotional health support budget, and aggregate data on school-based arrests, citations, and court referrals. The added transparency that the data collection requirements missing from the 2025 MOU provide are vital to ensure that school resource officers are following their stated duties and not serving as “school disciplinarians.”

Like the Town Council and the School Committee, we want students to be safe and to thrive. While we respect the intent to protect students, we strongly disagree that the increased use of law enforcement is that right approach. True safety comes from investing in supportive, preventive resources designed to help students, not from increased policing.

Thank you for considering our perspective. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Chanda Womack

Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education

Steven Brown

American Civil Liberties Union of Rhode Island

Denezia Fahie

Providence Student Union

Vanessa Flores-Maldonado

Providence Youth Student Movement

⁵ See, e.g., <https://studentsdemandaction.org/report/address-the-presence-of-school-resource-officers-in-your-school/>

⁶ At the state level, see the ACLU’s March 2023 report, “Still Oversuspended and Underserved: Continued Disparities in Suspension Rates in Rhode Island.” <https://www.riaclu.org/publications/report-still-oversuspended-and-underserved-continued-disparities-suspension-rates-rhode/>