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Hailey Dash

Hello everyone. My name is Hailey Dash and I am a co-founder of Asilu Collective, who I am speaking on behalf of today, to present to you why OCDSB *must* defund their SRO program.

I contend, with the support of various local organizations and hundreds of supporters of our No Cops in School campaign, that the SRO program puts students of colour at risk of violence and therefore does not provide a safe learning environment for them.

Our collective has received dozens of stories from students, parents, educators, and community members stating their experiences with SROs and Ottawa police officers, an overwhelming amount of these stories which have come from OCDSB-affiliated folks. These stories detail anxiety, fear, violence, racism, sexism, and abuse. Various OCDSB students have indicated to us that SRO officers have slut-shamed them when reporting cases of sexual harassment in school, while other OCDSB students cite the abuse of force from SROs towards Black and brown boys. Our youth cannot continue to be exposed to this violence, it is unacceptable.

Police presence in OCDSB schools provides a violent, and therefore inadequate, learning environment for Black and brown youth. These students are not provided the same learning environment that white students are, as white students often do not have these same fears and/or experiences with SROs. This creates an easily avoidable barrier for students of colour, and this is why the OCDSB *must* defund police presence in their schools immediately.

There *must* be a shift from punishment, to accountability, trust, and healing in order to ensure an equal opportunity to learning for students of colour. To quote a story shared from one of our community members: if education is to be a tool to fight inequality, then we have to focus on community building, not violence."

Best,

Hailey Dash