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For Immediate Release

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Statement of Concern Regarding Walkertown High School SRO-Involved Incident

At Action4Equity, we are deeply troubled by the recent video circulating on social media of a School Resource Officer (SRO) forcefully punching a female student and subsequently taking her to the floor in a very aggressive manner at Walkertown High School. Recurring incidents like this highlight the need for preventive and predictive measures to be in place to eliminate altercations of this magnitude between SROs and students.

The Sheriff's Office should adopt a process by which their deputies are educated in strategies for self-control.

That is why we publicly call for the implementation of a rigorous psychological evaluation conducted by a trained psychologist, in the hiring and placement process of SROs. There should also be a second phase to the process of placing SROs in schools, one that consists of a review panel which includes the school's administrative staff/faculty and the parents of enrolled students to make the selection process more inclusive, allowing the school community to review potential SRO candidates. This will help ensure that only individuals who are psychologically fit to work with students are hired and placed as SROs.

Additionally it is essential for schools and communities to recognize the impact of school-based trauma and take proactive steps to provide students with the necessary support and resources to promote healing and well-being. In alignment with a Whole Child-oriented education, it is crucial for schools and communities to work together to address the issue of school-based trauma and create a culture of healing and resilience for all students.

Schools should not be places where students experience violence as a means of discipline.

Furthermore, we believe that the Sheriff's department must take accountability by revising and modifying de-escalation protocol and training within their SRO recruitment. SROs must be trained and equipped to use control strategies that are appropriate for working with young people in schools, which may differ from those used when dealing with grown men who are resisting arrest. If an SRO is not capable of using appropriate **self or violence free crowd control strategies** in a school setting, they should not be placed in schools. **We reiterate, schools should be free of law enforcement brutality in response to student misbehavior.**

We call for immediate action to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future. In June of 2022, we called for "the formation of a community-based committee that will be empowered to both provide oversight of disciplinary actions and evaluate and recommend changes to district disciplinary policy on a regular basis. This committee can include representation from the district and school board, but it also must include key community stakeholders, trained behavioral and mental health professionals, grassroots activists working

directly with our most at-risk youth, and students and parents of families currently under care of the school district. Authority for selecting these committee members must not rest exclusively with the district, and all WSFCS students fourteen years of age and older should be empowered to serve and select representatives.”

The reach of this committee must include oversight of Student Resource Officers (SROs), as outlined above. The school district’s [contract with the FCSO](#) - **which is up for renewal in June** - must be revised to provide for this oversight. We cannot entrust law enforcement agencies to monitor their own patterns and practices. It is time for the community to be directly involved in the oversight of law enforcement officers at work in the schools.

We call upon the school board to endorse this proposal for a community-based accountability board and do everything in its power to make it a reality, sooner and not later. Our past statements when these avoidable and traumatic incidents occur ([here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) demonstrate that preventive and predictive measures must be put in place, and SROs must be held to a higher standard of accountability to ensure the safety and well-being of all students.

Action4Equity is a black-led, intentionally multi-racial coalition of educators, parents, students, faith leaders, and community members building a movement to advance equity for students in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools in the areas of academic achievement, access to high-quality instruction, and safe and healthy school environments. www.action4equityws.org

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