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All quotes attributable to Defund WPD

A Statement from Defund WPD in Support of WPS Educators: Trade SROs for Educators and PPE!

104 Worcester Public School educators receiving pink slips the same week that the city council voted to increase the policing budget is alarming. Our city's de-prioritizing of these essential jobs goes against good policy and judgment, further slashing the educational and social programs that all Worcester residents will benefit from in the coming year.

In the FY 2021 budget, the city and school department has set aside \$861,000 for police officers in our schools. This is an increase from last year despite academic research showing Student Resource Officers (SROs) make Black and Brown students feel less safe (Theriot and Orme, 2016) and the presence of SROs increases the likelihood that students are criminalized for minor misbehavior (Pigott, Stearns, and Khey, 2017) - an experience that can then place students on a fast track to jail or prison.

Cutting teaching jobs while increasing policing is the perfect illustration of the systemic issues Defund WPD has been calling attention to. More policing at the expense of city services providing stable housing, access to education, and opportunities for youth to engage in sports, arts and the workforce makes our city less safe and stands in contrast to the underlying principles of the Black Lives Matter movement.

While the Educational Association of Worcester has not asked for our support nor been in communication with Defund WPD, we stand in solidarity with the protesters and union members fighting for jobs, PPE and re-allocating budget items to better serve the educational needs of WPS students. Defund WPD demands that city officials and school committee members re-allocate the money from SROs towards re-hiring pink-slipped educators and purchasing the necessary PPE to make the upcoming school year resume safely for WPS staff and families.

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