

Health and Cultural Wealth:

Student Perspectives on Police-Free Schools in Fresno, California

Tell the school board what's needed to protect student safety and health in Fresno Unified School District (FUSD)

- 📌 Speak your truth! What you have to say matters, and your voice has the power to make a difference.
- 📌 The below talking points are meant to offer support as you tell your own story — feel free to use ones that feel relevant and make them your own.
- 📌 Remember that you are not alone. Many students, teachers, staff, and community organizations are calling for FUSD to divest (take money away) from police and invest in student wellness. The facts below are to help you protect your family's health and well-being.

Fresno overspends on school policing and fails to support students

- FUSD spends almost \$3 million a year on school police.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, FUSD lost millions from their budget, but continued to spend more money on school police officers.
- In 2015-2016, police arrested 159 students on FUSD campuses. That's the third highest number of arrests in schools in California.
- School policing is racist: Black students are 9% of the FUSD student body, but make up 25% of students referred to police and 23% of students arrested.
- Mental health and social-emotional care for students isn't sufficiently available: FUSD has only one school psychologist per 1,144 students. The national recommendation is no more than 750 students for each school psychologist.

Divest from school police: Police harm students in schools

- Young people who are stopped more often by police have higher levels of anxiety and trauma. Young people stopped by police in their schools have the highest levels of trauma.
- The more trauma a student has experienced, the worse their health will be. Experiences of trauma can lead to health problems like depression, anxiety, or cancer.
- Nationally, schools with police have more suspensions and expulsions and 3.5 times more arrests than schools without police.
- Nationally, young people who were suspended even once were twice as likely to be arrested than those who had not been suspended.

Invest the \$3 million from school police into student health

- Schools can operate from a model of community cultural wealth by recognizing the skills and knowledge that students of color bring to the classroom and changing school culture and school policy based on that knowledge.
- Schools that recognize the impact of trauma in student's lives reduce post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression and help students feel confident enough to show up to class and be motivated to get work done.
- Students are 21 times more likely to receive mental health care through school-based counseling than anywhere else.
- When schools have more mental health counselors, students are suspended less often, have better attendance, and are more likely to graduate.
- Restorative justice is a way for students to resolve conflict without punishment: a middle school in Oakland had 87% fewer suspensions and no expulsions in the first two years of using restorative justice practices.
- Students at schools with health and wellness centers have better health, including lower rates of asthma, emergency department or hospital admissions, and substance use and higher rates of vaccination, contraception use, and prenatal care.

Have questions about this or want support?

Contact Fresno Barrios Unidos at info@Fresnobarriosunidos.org
Read the research and references at HumanImpact.org/HealthNotSROs