



**SENATE CANDIDATE STEVE CHOI:
“DO NOT DEFUND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS”**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TRUMBULL, 9/1/2020 – Steve Choi, the Republican candidate for State Senate in District 22, which includes the municipalities of Trumbull, Bridgeport, and Monroe, issued the following statement regarding proposed federal legislation to remove funding for school resource officers (SROs):

Senate Bill 4360, also known as the Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act, proposes to eliminate future funding of school resource officers (SRO’s) and will re-direct federal grant funds to counselors and personnel that support mental health in public schools. Connecticut Senator Chris Murphy, a co-sponsor of the bill, stated, “It’s time to get police officers out of our schools. The evidence shows these officers don’t make our schools any safer. In fact, research has shown [they] can increase physical danger to young people.”

While this legislation is a congressional issue, Town Boards and Commissions accept federal funds such as the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant and other grants to pay for SROs in our schools. The Trumbull Town Council approves these grants on an annual basis and to date has expressed no issues with applying for or receiving these funds for community policing efforts.

The presence of SROs is necessary in our public schools. Currently, Trumbull Public Schools have SROs in both middle schools and Trumbull High. School resource officers build relationships with students, help kids in trouble, and are successful in preventing an incident before it occurs. Contrary to Senator Murphy’s belief of a systemic school-to-prison pipeline, SROs are not just uniformed police in schools looking to arrest kids and send them through the juvenile justice system. SROs receive special training to earn and maintain their certification; they consistently receive in-service training and undergo annual evaluations by the school administration. Public Act No. 15-168, which passed in 2015, requires collaboration between school resource officers and boards of education in Connecticut.

As with any good community policing effort, SROs build relationships of trust with students, teachers, administrators, and school staff. One SRO in a Bridgeport public school is a certified basketball referee. While the kids might not always agree with his calls on the court, they do not doubt his commitment to ensuring their safety at school.

Recently my wife, Sidia, and I agreed that our family will begin sharing our locations via our mobile devices. Knowing where our children are allows us, as parents, peace of mind knowing they are safe. While technology plays a role in security, there is no substitute to having a trained, certified officer on school grounds.

SROs have proven to be so successful; the concept is now being applied to retail. In July 2020, a \$125,000 COPS grant was awarded to the Town of Trumbull to provide community policing at Westfield Trumbull Mall.

The first full day of school for Trumbull students is Tuesday, September 8. Our schools need the continued presence of school resource officers to keep our kids safe. For those Trumbull parents who choose to send their children to school, SROs will be there for your children this school year. The question remains whether federal, state, and local legislators will fund SROs in our schools next year.

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