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PRESS RELEASE

Children's Defense Fund-Ohio Urges Caution Before Placing Police Officers in Schools

Columbus, OH – At a time when many Ohio school districts are grappling with budgets to pay for police officers – also called School Resource Officers – the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio urges school administrators to step back and consider the facts.

Data show that the presence of police officers in schools increases the likelihood that children in those schools will be arrested for minor, non-violent disciplinary matters such as talking back, dress code violations, and other issues that are better left to educators to address. In an issue brief published today, CDF-Ohio describes why increasing arrests of students contributes to pushing children out of school and into the juvenile justice system. Increased arrest rates negatively affect school safety and security by creating a negative school climate.

“We hope that school districts and communities will view this issue brief as a resource and consider the data before making decisions about their School Resource Officer programs,” says Renuka Mayadev, Executive Director of Children's Defense Fund-Ohio.

For Ohio school districts that already have police officers in their school buildings, the issue brief also describes promising models and practices in place across the country that minimize the risks associated with integrating police officers into school buildings.

Highlights include:

- Crafting a clear, detailed memorandum of understanding between the school and the police department.
- Ensuring high quality, consistent data collection and monitoring of the impact of the presence of School Resource Officers.
- Ensuring that School Resource Officers receive extensive training.

- Integrating community input and participation into the School Resource Officer program.

“Schools have a responsibility to ensure the school environment is child-focused. Police officers are an essential part of community safety efforts, but placing them in schools without careful planning and training can have disastrous results for Ohio children,” says Sarah Biehl, Policy Director at Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio.

The issue brief is available at <http://www.cdfohio.org/research-library/documents/school-resource-officers.html>.

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The Children’s Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.