Tips for Presenting/Testifying at a School Board Meeting

**Preparation**

1. Observe a board meeting to learn how the meeting is structured.
2. Research your board – try an internet search for information and media related to each board member so you know your audience.
3. Its not typical for the Board to ask or answer questions during an Open Forum. Be prepared to give your remarks without comment from the Board.
4. Research district goals and/or board goals so you can connect them with your remarks.
5. Research the district policy on SRO’s and look for an equity policy (sometimes called an equity lens).
6. Provide a one-page fact sheet that highlights (see the SRO Removal Toolkit for a sample(?)) the main data or arguments to each board member.
7. While facts and statistics are helpful, it can be equally persuasive if you are able to share a story that shows these numbers have a human face.
8. Find out what the process is for speaking during Open Forum – this can usually be found out by calling the main district office or looking on the Board’s website.
9. Find out how long you will have to speak – it can be anywhere from 1-3 minutes. Prepare your remarks to fit within this timeframe – there is nothing worse than getting cut off in the middle.
   1. Practice your remarks out loud multiple times with a timer to ensure that you stay within your timeline.
10. Write down your remarks to ensure a polished presentation (see writing tips below).
11. Be confident, this is your school district and you have every right to be heard.

**Writing Tips for Your Remarks**

1. Introduce yourself and your school affiliation (they will need this info for the minutes)
2. Open with your key point – i.e. “I am here today to ask you to end the policy of having SRO’s in our schools” or “I’ve come to talk to you about removing SRO’s from our schools”
3. Prepare your remarks to fit within the time frame allotted for speakers.
4. Write the way you imagine yourself speaking.
5. Use powerful and clear language.
6. If possible,connect your reasons for making this change to board and district goals as well as their equity policy.
7. End your remarks by clearly stating the action you want the school board take – i.e. “I want to conclude by urging the board to change their policy and remove SRO’s from our schools”
8. Thank the Board when done.

**Sample Outline for Presentation/Testimony**

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| INTRODUCTION | Share your name and district affiliation (i.e. “My name is \_\_\_\_ and I’m a parent of \_\_\_ grade student at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ school” or “My name is \_\_\_\_ and I’m a \_\_\_ grade student at \_\_\_\_\_\_ school” |
| State your agenda (why you’re there) “I’m here to advocate for the removal of SROs from our schools) |
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| BODY | Negative impacts SRO’s have on students and schools – increase in arrests, disproportionate arrests, school-to-prison pipeline, etc |
| Discuss lack of other supports like counselors, Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW), and nurses (if applicable) |
| Point out that these results/impacts contradict district or board goals and equity policy – use specific language in district/board goals or equity policy to make your point (if applicable) |
| Finally, share the background about why SRO’s came to be (youth violence and school shootings, etc) then point out data that clearly shows these things are not resolved with SRO’s in schools |
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| CONCLUSION | Share a story here that helps bring home your point |
| Clearly state the action you are asking the board to take. “Based on the evidence provided, I ask that you take immediate action to remove SROs from our schools” |
| Thank the Board Chair and Board Members for the opportunity to be heard |
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