



# Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers

*AFT Pennsylvania • American Federation of Teachers • AFL-CIO*  
10 South Nineteenth Street at the River • Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15203-1842  
Phone: (412) 431-5900; (412) 431-4755 • Fax: (412) 431-6882 • Website: [www.pft400.org](http://www.pft400.org)

## **PFT Executive Board Supports PPS Police Officers and Recommends Changes to the District's Policy on Police and Firearms**

Whereas, the Division of School Safety exists to support the educational mission of the District by assuring that schools are safe, secure and welcoming for students and staff; and

Whereas, the Board is authorized by Act 30 of 1997 to hire school police officers (SPOs) and request that certain powers be conferred upon such SPOs by the Court of Common Pleas; and

Whereas, the District has established the Division of School Safety that includes the positions of Chief of School Safety, Assistant Chief, Commander, more than twenty (20) Resident Security Specialists and School Police Officers, and more than fifty (50) School Security Aides; and

Whereas, the PPS Division of School Safety is a police department with a police force larger than many municipal police departments in Allegheny County; and

Whereas, the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers is the collective bargaining agent for paraprofessionals including the Resident Security Specialists, School District Police Officers, and Senior School District Police Officers (collectively "School Police Officers" or SPOs); and

Whereas, SPOs are police officers with police powers; and a District SPO's "essential job functions" include:

- *Operates as school police officer in all matters dealing with violations of the School Discipline Code and/or the criminal code by student and non-student offenders on or around school property or at school functions;*
- *Comply with and enforce District regulations and uphold state and local laws and ordinances;*
- *Attempts to prevent damage to school property and protect against physical violence;*
- *Make arrests as appropriate;*
- *Apprehends criminals, disarms individuals carrying various weapons, confiscates drugs and paraphernalia, gathers evidence at crime scenes, questions witnesses, diffuses potentially violent situations, breaks up fights and riots when they occur;*
- *Issues tickets to traffic violators; and*

Whereas, PPS Police Officers are called to incidents in and around District schools including calls regarding "shots fired" and "armed subject" on or near school property; and PPS Police Officers the first responders to an armed intruder; and

-over-

Whereas, PPS Police Officers members of the only police department in Allegheny County who are not issued firearms; and

Whereas, other regional school districts utilize School Resource Officers (SROs) who are armed, patrol, and have a presence in schools; and

Whereas, the reliance on City of Pittsburgh Police to back up PPS School Police Officers is a flawed safety system due to lengthy response time of the Pittsburgh Police, the reluctance of the Pittsburgh Police to deal with situations near certain schools, including afternoon and evening sporting events that attract non-PPS students and adults; therefore

**Be It Resolved**, the PFT Executive Board recognizes and supports the essential role that PPS School Police Officers and School Security Aides perform every day to help ensure that students, staff, and visitors in District schools are safe during the time they are on or near District property;

**And Be It Resolved**, the PFT Executive Board recognizes and supports the unique and essential relationship that PPS School Police Officers have with PPS students; and the skills and sensitivity that PPS School Police Officers have in quelling violent situations, diffusing potential violent situations, and de-escalating tense interactions that could become more serious;

**And Be It Resolved**, the PFT Executive Board recognizes that District's policy to prohibit arming PPS School Police, such as officers who patrol alone in mobile units, while directing them to respond to "shots fired" works against increasing safety in schools, increases risk for students, staff, visitors and School Police Officers;

**And Be It Resolved**, the PFT Executive Board recommends that the District take the appropriate steps to change its policy that prohibits the issuance of firearms to any PPS School Police Officer;

**And Be It Resolved** that the PFT Executive Board recommends that a change to the District policy includes rigorous training and appropriate psychological evaluation of PPS School Police Officers prior to the issuance of continuum of force tools including firearms.

**And Be It Further Resolved** that the position of the PFT Executive Board is that any process to change the District's policy regarding firearms and PPS School Police must include participation of PFT-represented PPS School Police Officers and PFT Executive Board Members.

Adopted by the PFT Executive Board on  
September 24, 2015