

September 2, 2015

To: Interested Parties

From: Ben Tulchin and Corey O’Neil; Tulchin Research

Re: **Voters Prefer More Counselors and Fewer Police in Schools to Improve School Safety**

Tulchin Research recently conducted a California statewide survey on behalf of the ACLU to assess voters’ attitudes about safety in California public schools with a focus on the presence of police. In determining how to best keep public schools safe in California, voters question the current practice of permanently placing armed police on school campuses and, instead, endorse a plan that would emphasize having more counselors and mental health professionals in schools to more effectively address student conflict on campus.

We provide below a summary of the key findings from the survey.

Voters Favor Counselors over Police in Public Schools

When it comes to making schools safer, voters in California strongly favor counselors and mental health professionals over having armed police stationed on campus on a permanent basis as more than twice as many voters prefer placing counselors in schools than police to improve school safety. Specifically, nearly nine-in-ten voters (88 percent) support schools having a counselor to improve safety compared to only nine percent that oppose this proposal. In contrast, a majority of voters (50 percent) actually opposes adding armed police officers to public school campuses whereas just 42 percent support putting more police in schools. The overwhelming preference for putting counselors in schools over more police indicates voters would like to see school districts take a different approach to keeping schools safe.

The table below shows the results among likely voters in California.

Voters Prefer Counselors Over Police in Schools

Here are some different approaches to school safety. For each one, please indicate whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose that approach.

	Support	Oppose	Don't Know.	Supp – Opp
<i>Have counselors and mental health professionals in public schools</i>	88%	9%	3%	+79
<i>Put <u>more</u> armed police in public schools on a permanent basis</i>	42%	50%	7%	-8

Strong Support for Measure to Improve School Safety

Voters broadly support a comprehensive proposal to improve school safety by ensuring every school has a counselor or mental health professional funded by revenues currently directed to stationing armed police officers in schools. Nearly three out of four California voters (73 percent) supports this proposal compared to just one out of five (21 percent) who oppose it. This strong support carries across all California voter demographic groups and geographic regions:

- Support is strong among all ethnic groups in the state including Latino (78 percent), African American (74 percent), white (71 percent) and Asian (69 percent) voters;
- Bridging the partisan divide, Democratic (81 percent), Republican (63 percent) and independent (70 percent) voters all overwhelmingly support a proposal to add counselors to California public schools; and
- Voters across all regions of the state strongly support improving safety in schools with more counselors and mental health professionals with the San Francisco Bay Area (80 percent) showing the strongest support, followed by the Central Valley (77 percent), LA County (73 percent), the greater Los Angeles area (70 percent), the Sacramento/North region (70 percent), and San Diego County (62 percent).

The table below shows this broad support among these various groups of likely voters.

Measure to Increase Counselors with Police Funding

Here is a little information about a new education proposal that's been suggested.

Many public schools in California currently have police officers permanently stationed on campus to address student conflicts and violence. Some community members have concerns about the presence of police because police at schools have been arresting and citing students of color at a higher rate than white students while others say the police help make our schools safer. These officers are funded through education dollars while few schools have counselors or mental health experts available to reduce student conflict and behavioral problems. There is a proposal to ensure every school has a counselor or mental health professional available to help students with issues and reduce student conflict. Counselors would be funded by reducing the amount of police that are permanently stationed in schools and police would be called in to reduce conflict as a last resort.

Now that you have read some information about the proposal, would you say that you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose this proposal?

	Support	Oppose	Supp-Opp
All California Voters	73%	21%	+52
<u>Ethnicity</u>			
Black	74%	18%	+56
Latino	78%	16%	+61
Asian	69%	28%	+41
White	71%	23%	+48
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	81%	14%	+67
Republicans	63%	30%	+33
Independents	70%	24%	+46
<u>Region</u>			
LA County	73%	21%	+53
LA Area	70%	25%	+45
Bay Area	80%	17%	+63
San Diego	62%	25%	+37
Sacramento/ North	70%	20%	+50
Central Valley	77%	20%	+57

Voters Believe Counselors Are Better Suited to Handle Internal School Issues

Voters make it clear they want counselors addressing student conflict on school campus rather than police officers. Voters agree by an overwhelming margin (74 percent agree to 21 percent disagree) that counselors who receive training to work with students and resolve conflicts are best suited to handle internal school issues and keep kids out of trouble before it happens as opposed to police who are typically trained to arrest people.

The table below shows the results among likely voters.

Trained Counselors Important to Voters for School Conflicts

Here are some statements that have been made about school safety issues. Please indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each statement:

	Total Agree	Total Disagree	Don't Know.	Agree – Disagree
<i>Counselors are trained to work with students in conflict resolution and keep kids in school and out of trouble while police are trained to arrest people. Counselors are therefore better suited to handle internal school issues between students.</i>	74%	21%	4%	+53

Conclusion

Our research finds that voters across the state would like to see their school districts take a different approach when it comes to dealing with student conflict on campus. Voters want to see reforms made that increase the number of trained counselors and mental health professionals in public schools and to ensure every public school has at least one counselor or mental health professional. To fund such a policy, voters are willing to give up having armed police stationed in schools. This proposal to ensure every public school has a counselor or mental health professional garners broad support from voters across the state.

Survey Methodology: *Tulchin Research conducted a statewide survey in California among 1100 likely November 2016 voters, including a statewide base sample of 1000 voters and an oversample of 100 African American voters. The oversample of African American voters provides increased statistical confidence for that specific demographic group. Interviews were conducted online from July 15-20, 2015. The margin of error for the statewide base sample is +/- 3.46 percent.*