



N. D. "Rocky" Holcomb, Sheriff/High Constable
VIRGINIA BEACH SHERIFF'S OFFICE
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March 7, 2024

It is my request to the Virginia Beach School Board and City Council that, during this budget season, we identify a way to fund and reinstate the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program in Virginia Beach City Public Schools.

As you may know, the D.A.R.E. program was cut in 2015 due to budgetary constraints. At the time, the program cost about \$780,000 a year and was run by the Virginia Beach Sheriff's Office. In addition, D.A.R.E. has revamped its curriculum over the last 10 years, with studies showing that it is more effective than past programs, with D.A.R.E. students being less likely to use drugs than their peers.

Over the years we have seen an increase in bullying, gang activity, drug use, and exposure to fentanyl. This is very concerning to all our citizens, and I believe that D.A.R.E. will have a positive impact in reversing these trends. Beyond drug prevention, D.A.R.E. fosters essential skills like communication, self-esteem building, and positive interactions with authority figures, including law enforcement. These are all crucial for our children's healthy development and the health and safety of our community.

For these reasons, it is my request that we find funding to get D.A.R.E. back into our elementary schools. To do so, we will need support from the School Board and City Council to find funding for this essential program, but -- once funded -- my staff and I stand ready to do the heavy lifting to reimplement the program even better than it was.

As a former City Council member, I understand the difficult task before you this budget season and the difficult choices you must make. However, I feel strongly that there is a path to get D.A.R.E. back into our schools once again to educate our young people and turn them away from destructive behaviors.

So, as we go through this budget season, it is my hope that you will join me and find a way to fund D.A.R.E., starting with putting this topic on the agenda for deliberation. Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and I look forward to further discussion.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rocky Holcomb'.

Sheriff Rocky Holcomb