

James Adu

**Testimony Supporting SB 572:
An Act Concerning Community Crisis Response Teams and Reentry Centers.
Legislative Office Building
James Adu**

Representative Maria Horn, Senator Dennis Bradley, Senator Catherine Osten, Representative Alphonse Paolillo, and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is James Adu, I oversee Street Outreach Services, a network of six organizations, providing medical, mental, substance abuse, harm reduction and case management services to unsheltered (street homeless) individuals in the City of New Haven.

I support SB 572 particularly because our already marginalized citizens, many of whom are working tirelessly hard to live a meaningful life through rediscovery of their capabilities and ability to contribute to our communities, however small, can not be further marginalized by costly and thus far ineffective law enforcement interventions. SB 572 looks to adopt a holistic approach to respond to 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls with a robust team of professionals, experienced in the field of human services (The Community Crisis Response Team), to assess and provide the most appropriate intervention.

The Community Crisis Response Team will limit unneeded contact with law enforcement by dispatching appropriately qualified professionals to respond to 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls related to welfare checks, homelessness, substance use disorder and mental health crises.

The Community Crisis Response Team program will create a support system to work with individuals who should not be incarcerated but provided with the opportunity to get connected to treatment, services and programs during their moments of crisis. This social service approach to law enforcement will reduce the incarceration rate and divert people from unnecessary visits to the emergency room. Police have been tasked with responding to many social issues that they are inappropriately equipped for. As the nation and state call for social justice and reimagining policing, SB 572 seeks to enhance first responses and reduce repeat emergency calls, while getting constituents the help that police officers don't have the training, resources, or time to provide.

I also support SB 572 because it is the first step to ensuring that men and women returning home from incarceration have better chances to reintegrate into society. People returning home from incarceration are disproportionately affected by issues related to housing, employment, substance use disorder, mental illness, and chronic medical illness. The Reentry Welcome Centers will ensure that people are connected to these services on the day of their release, rather than dropped with no resources or assistance. The centers will also help people apply for public benefits and provide continuing supports while people are already in the community.

From a fiscal perspective, SB 572 is a long-term investment to generate savings due to diversion from incarceration and the emergency room. From a human perspective, SB 572 provides the opportunity to fix systemic issues that disproportionately affect communities of color.