



# NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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## TESTIMONY SUPPORTING SB-572: AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS AND REENTRY CENTERS.

Public Safety and Security Committee

February 11, 2021

Presented By: Kathleen Callahan, MSW

Dear Honorable Chairpersons Horn and Bradley, Ranking Members Champagne and Green, Vice Chairs Osten and Paolillo, and all other Members of the Committee of Children of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Kathleen Callahan, a resident of Stratford, and the Community Programming and Development Lead at the Connecticut Women's Consortium in Hamden. I am also the chair of the National Association of Social Workers Connecticut Chapter's Education and Legislative Action Network (NASW/CT ELAN). I am testifying on behalf of the chapter which represents over 2,300 members. We call upon the Public Safety and Security Committee to support *SB-572: An Act Concerning Community Crisis Response Teams and Reentry Centers*.

The legislative agenda of NASW/CT emphasizes advancing racial, economic, and social justice by promoting culturally responsive practices in all aspects of community life, including mental health and addiction services and equitable access to justice. This includes programs that offer community-based crisis interventions, treatment, and alternatives to arrest and incarceration. This aligns with recommendations from NASW National in their recently released "Recommendations to the Biden-Harris Administration and Congress"<sup>1</sup> that calls for deployment of social workers to improve crisis response capacity and implementation of diversion efforts across the sequential intercept continuum.<sup>2</sup>

Police are currently responding to many behavioral health and social service issues for which they are not appropriately equipped. While training officers in recognizing signs and symptoms of behavioral health disorders and the use of de-escalation models is needed, it is this collaborative, community-based approach to law enforcement that will

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<sup>1</sup> National Association of Social Workers. (2021). *2021 Blueprint of Federal Social Policy Priorities*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=KPdZqqY60t4%3D&portalid=0>

<sup>2</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2020, June 30). *The Sequential Intercept Model (SIM)*. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/criminal-juvenile-justice/sim-overview>.

reduce the incarceration rate and divert people from unnecessary visits to the emergency department.

It is also necessary to address racial, economic, and social justice issues during the reentry intercept point. NASW/CT believes that statewide Reentry Welcome Centers will ensure that people are connected to essential housing, employment, medical and behavioral health, and education services upon release, help people apply for public benefits, and provide continuing supports while they are in the community.

Additionally, NASW/CT supports legislation that specifically promotes elimination of inequities and disparities relating to race, class, and ethnicity and we are aware that incarceration disproportionately impacts people and communities of color. In closing, NASW-CT urges the committee to vote in favor of *SB-572: An Act Concerning Community Crisis Response Teams and Reentry Centers*.