



**Nadine Horton, Whalley/Edgewood/Beaver Hills Community Management Team (WEB)**

**Testimony Supporting SB 572:**

**An Act Concerning Community Crisis Response Teams and Reentry Centers.**

**Legislative Office Building**

**February 10, 2021**

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 Nadine Horton, and I am the chair of the Whalley/Edgewood/Beaver Hills Community Management Team (WEB). WEB works to improve the quality of life, reduce crime and improve the safety of our community through the integration of neighborhood groups, institutions, and individuals working in partnership with the department of police services and other city departments in New Haven.

WEB supports SB 572 because it will tackle issues like mass incarceration and mental health care access that disproportionately affect communities of color. 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. A team like this would prove to be very beneficial in our neighborhood because we have a main thoroughfare, Whalley Avenue, that runs through our neighborhood and serves as a hub for folks experiencing substance use disorders and homelessness. As I write this testimony, there has been a man living on Whalley Avenue for the past few weeks who has all his belongings in a grocery shopping cart that he moves to various storefronts because he has no place to stay and suffers from alcohol

addiction. Business owners who understandably do not want this man loitering out front will call the police to get him to move along, and fortunately our neighborhood officers are familiar with him so they get him to do so with no issues. This is not a situation the police should be dealing with; the only “crime” this man has committed is loitering because he has no place to stay and there is nothing the police can do about that. However, a Community Crisis Support Team could help this man. This program will create a support system to deal with individuals that 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. Police have been charged with responding to many social issues that they are inappropriately equipped for. As the nation and state call for social justice and re-imagining policing, SB 572 seeks to enhance first responses and reduce repeat emergency calls, while getting constituents the help that police officers do not have the training, resources or time to provide.

We 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. Through my work as a research assistant at the Yale School of Medicine that deals exclusively with the reentry population, I have seen firsthand how 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 upon their release, will help people apply for public benefits, and provide continuing support while people reintegrate back into 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 long standing systemic issues that have destroyed communities of color and approving this bill could be the first step in starting to heal some of that damage.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter,



Nadine Horton

Chair

Whalley Edgewood Beaver Hills Community Management Team

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