

Monya Saunders
Testimony Supporting SB 572:
An Act Concerning Community Crisis Response Teams and Reentry Centers.
Legislative Office Building 02/11/21

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 Monya Saunders

I support SB 572 because it will tackle issues 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.

The Community Crisis Response Team program will create a support system to deal 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.

My name is Monya Saunders, I am a CHW for Transitions Clinic. I work with woman returning back into community from jail or prison. I would like to see more resource for these woman as there are very few to no resources at all for woman who are struggling with homelessness, substance use disorders, domestic violence, behavior health disorders etc. As I work diligently to serve these woman, it hard to be affective with the few resources I have. I would like to become more affective for these woman and see more services provided for them. Beginning returning back into the community with a ID card, or use grants to assist with obtaining a valid ID. Not having the proper ID create more barriers for these woman to accomplish their small reachable goals. Create more half way houses for these woman to and get a fresh start and I believe will also help with recidivism. The system that is in place currently in my opinion they are set up for failure. Lets do all we can to keep these men and woman home and not in a jail cell.