



Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'm Chana Wiley, and I am the co-chair of the Columbus Safety Collective a group of advocacy organizations, directly impacted families, and community leaders dedicated to creating a safer and more just Columbus for all residents. I actually was brought into this work through a tragedy, and am now trying to find solutions. I joined OFUPAC, where I am the Campaign Manager, to help make policy changes, and ensure that the tragedy I experienced does not happen again.

I joined the Columbus Safety Collective as an advocate due to the unfortunate death of my brother Jaron Thomas, by the hands of Columbus Police Department. He was in a mental health crisis and only needed help, with transportation to a hospital for evaluation and stabilization for his crisis. He did not have a weapon, was not combative, and was excited to see that what he thought was help, had arrived. He needed an ambulance to transport him to the hospital, not the police to use excessive force and treat him as a criminal and beat him to death. Jaron coded in the front yard due to him being beaten and kicked with a knee to his back while tied at the ankles and handcuffed. It was when the police noticed his body limp, they called an ambulance and had them try to revive my brother.

This was considered a co-responder model which failed to meet the needs of my brother who suffered from schizophrenia. **If Columbus had a nonpolice emergency response system to this type of call my brother would be here today.** This has caused a lot of issues in our family and community. I am still dealing with the effects of his death, my son and his daughters now suffer from mental health issues stemming from his death. There was no accountability from the city in our lawsuit. This issue continues to happen over and over again, here in Columbus and across the country.

We as the Columbus Safety Collective, and as community members, have been very clear with the City that we need a crisis response program that is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for residents of Columbus who are nonviolent and pose no threat to themselves or others. So many of our community members, including my brother, just need *care* and *help* in their times of need. I've spoken before you for years asking you to invest in a program that is part of 911 dispatch, where crisis responders are the emergency personnel who respond to mental health calls. Investing in an alternative response program is an investment in community safety. Existing emergency services are not enough to meet the needs of residents, and in fact result in the loss of lives.



The Columbus Safety Collective hoped our City Council members had finally heard our urgent message when you allocated the 1.2 million dollars for an alternative response program, but we have yet to see anything concrete beyond the plan and timeline for an evaluation of current programs.

We, your constituents and residents of Columbus, deserve a fully funded alternative response program. We ask you to lead bravely, set aside political differences, and deliver.

Columbus offered a resounding endorsement of these services nearly five years ago when you announced your intention to reimagine public safety. We refuse to wait any longer for basic community care.

Thank you for your time.