

Good evening, President Hardin, Councilmember Remey, etc.

My name is Helen Anne Sweeney of B.R.E.A.D, which is a member of the Columbus Safety Collective. Our comments focus on the policy questions posed by the Division of Public Safety in the RFP for an Alternative Response Plan. This system would handle non-violent crises involving, but not limited to, behavioral health, food insecurity, and wellness checks. B.R.E.A.D. raises the following concerns about these policy questions:

1. The RFP is not explicit as whether the non-police crisis responders are first responders. Non-police crisis responders *must* be first responders. Many non-police crises have the same urgency as a crisis involving violence, fire, or a medical emergency. When ill-equipped, poorly trained first responders are sent to handle non-police crises, avoidable bad outcomes, such as handcuffing and shootings, can occur.
2. According to the RFP, the contract is to evaluate *whether* peer supporters will be part of the non-police crisis response system staff. This should not be in question: Peer supporters must be trained and hired to be non-police crisis workers. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration encourages the integration of peer supporters on mobile crisis teams, since people in crisis often lack trust in police, whose presence can be a negative trigger for some people, resulting in escalation.
3. According to the RFP, the contractor will develop a plan to connect 911 to 988. The non-police crisis system should be an integral part of a cohesive system of care that connects individuals to appropriate services, including other crisis lines. Connectivity includes the ability of 911 to transfer and receive other crisis line calls as well as the necessary protocols needed to transfer calls, contingencies for transferring calls, cross-training, and development of on-going relationships.

4. Finally, the RFP requests that the contractor establish a temporary citizen advisory board to review plans that the contractor has developed. Also, the RFP asks the contractor to analyze the feasibility of having this board. Columbus Safety Collective has advocated for a Citizen Advisory Board to develop, implement, and oversee operations. This board will seek and integrate community input on an on-going basis about service availability and gaps, thus expanding community input into policy development. Currently, community members often only have three minutes at public hearings to address policy concerns.

Thank you for your time.