



Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager, District 54

AB 2054 - CRISES Act: Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems

IN BRIEF

AB 2054 will establish the Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems (CRISES) Act pilot program, which will scale up community-based alternatives to police.

BACKGROUND & PROBLEM

In many cities across the state, community organizations are successfully responding to emergency situations involving unhoused people, people experiencing a mental health crisis, people exposed to intimate partner or community violence, people experiencing substance abuse, and people impacted by natural or climate disasters.

Despite the positive impact and cost savings of community-oriented responses to emergencies, California has done little to support and scale these efforts. Instead, law enforcement officers respond to emergencies that would be better suited to peer support experts, mental health providers or crisis counselors trained in de-escalating and resolving crises. These kinds of services need to be part of the web of emergency response networks.

The San Francisco Police Department estimates that up to 80% of calls for service in the city are for people in mental health crisis and that police officers bring close to 4,000 people per year to psychiatric facilities. San Francisco Mayor London Breed released a plan on June 11, 2020 to reform the San Francisco Police Department by replacing sworn officers responding to non-criminal activities with trained and non-armed professionals.

While law enforcement officers may be well intentioned, police presence can exacerbate a situation by causing fear in the person experiencing a crisis. There are significant, unnecessary costs associated with officers as first-responders for mental health crises, and for instances of intimate partner violence, among other situations that arise in our communities.

In worst case scenarios, officers use force in response to a person in crisis, resulting in unnecessary and unjust deaths. Policing has put too many people unnecessarily in

danger who only need help. For young Black men, police violence is a leading cause of death. Also, police kill people with mental health conditions, such as schizophrenia, 16 times more often than people without mental health issues.

SOLUTION

AB 2054 establishes the CRISES. Act pilot grant program, promoting community-based responses to local emergency situations, including, but not limited to:

- Public Health Crisis
- People Experiencing Homelessness
- Mental Health Crisis
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Community Violence
- Substance Use
- Natural Disasters

The program shall create and strengthen alternatives to law enforcement in response to crisis situations not related to or that do not require a Fire Department or Emergency Medical Service (EMS) response in communities where there is a history and pattern of racial profiling, law enforcement violence, gaps in law enforcement service or where vulnerable populations live.

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