



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



BERNARD C. "JACK" YOUNG
Mayor

MICHAEL S. HARRISON
Police Commissioner

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Michelle Wirzberger, Esq., Director of Government Affairs, Baltimore Police Dept.

RE: Senate Bill 305 – Public Safety – Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore Police Department **supports** Senate Bill 305.

Senate Bill 305 establishes the Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence within the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention. The Center is to provide technical support to local governments, law enforcement, public safety agencies, behavioral health agencies, and crisis service providers. Senate Bill 305 also establishes the Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee for the Center which would ultimately be responsible for developing recommendations for full implementation of the crisis implementation model program at the municipal, county and state level.

The Crisis Intervention model is an innovative partnership of law enforcement personnel, mental health and addiction professionals, individuals living with mental illness and/or addiction disorders and their families. The goal of these types of efforts is to destigmatize treatment while prioritizing the following:

- Strategies for de-escalating crises and connecting individuals to community resources that provide appropriate service;
- Appropriate use of hospital emergency services only after less restrictive alternatives have been considered;
- Opportunities for diversion from the criminal justice system; and
- Use of methods for addressing the long-term needs of individuals and families in order to provide for the least police-involved response.

The BPD supports the least police-involved response necessary for persons with Behavioral Health Disabilities or in Crisis consistent with community safety. As such, BPD has pledged to ensure that its members have the training and resources to appropriately respond to individuals with Behavioral Health Disabilities or those experiencing Crisis, including de-escalating and promoting peaceful resolutions to incidents, and diverting individuals to community resources that provide stabilizing service.

SB 350 will facilitate a state-wide discussion on how best to improve the criminal justice system's response to and treatment of individuals in the midst of a behavioral health crisis. This will lead to safer conditions for those experiencing a crisis, law enforcement officers and the public at large. Therefore, we respectfully request a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 305.