

**From:** Kristina Lawyer < >

**Sent:** Tuesday, January 19, 2021 7:15 PM

**To:** City Council (San Mateo) <[CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org)>; Joe Goethals <[jgoethals@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:jgoethals@cityofsanmateo.org)>; Eric Rodriguez <[erodriguez@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:erodriguez@cityofsanmateo.org)>; Diane Papan <[dpapan@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:dpapan@cityofsanmateo.org)>; Ed Barberini <[ebarberini@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:ebarberini@cityofsanmateo.org)>; Amourence Lee <[alee@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:alee@cityofsanmateo.org)>

**Subject:** Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Mental Health Partnership

Dear Mayor Rodriguez, Council members, Chief Barberini, and City Manager Corbett,

I have a brother who has manic depression and has spent many months in a mental health facility unwillingly via being arrested by the police. My brother is stable and living a productive life currently however, if we were black I may not be so privileged to still have my brother alive and with us. We know that those with mental health issues are not treated equitably and that police have killed thousands of black men and women with mental health issues across the country.

I am glad to see the City looking into creative responses to mental health crises. However, I urge you to reconsider the initially proposed model. Instead of sending mental health professionals to accompany police, please use this opportunity to create a crisis response team composed *solely* of mental health clinicians, social workers, and emergency medical support.

As a member of SURJ San Mateo and a resident of the city of San Mateo, I am writing to comment on the proposed Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Mental Health Partnership. There are multiple models, both locally and nationwide for programs with response teams that do not include police, including in Santa Clara County, San Francisco, Denver, Los Angeles, and Eugene, OR. I urge you to consider these programs as examples of how the San Mateo County pilot program can be structured.

While I appreciate the sense of urgency around this issue, I urge you to make time for public input on the design of the program before approving and launching it. The [report](#) by Data for Progress and The Justice Collaborative Institute concludes that

“[t]o be successful, these crisis response teams should operate independently of the criminal legal system, include both emergency and preventative services, and be fully funded to accomplish their mission.”

The new pilot program is an ideal opportunity for cities in San Mateo County to explore the advantages of a community-based, non-police response team. We call on you to structure the program following these three criteria for success.

Please let me know if you have any follow up questions.

Sincerely,  
Kristina Newberry  
San Mateo, CA