



Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee



March 23, 2023

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union- MA, the Center for Public Representation, the Disability Policy Consortium, Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee, Greater Boston Association of Black Social Workers, and the National Association of Social Workers- MA we would like to extend our gratitude for everything you and your teams do to support all Massachusetts citizens, particularly those from the most marginalized and underserved communities.

At this time, we respectfully request that you support the matching grant program **Equitable Approaches to Public Safety (EAPS) operated out of the Department of Public Health at \$3.61 Million** in the FY24 House Ways & Means budget. Matching grants for Equitable Approaches to Public Safety (FY23 line-item 4512-2020) are used to implement alternative response models for nonviolent mental and behavioral health crises by dispatching community-based teams of providers and peers instead of or alongside law enforcement. Preference is given to models using unarmed responders. Now in its second year, the EAPS program has garnered more than a dozen municipal applications for funding, with awards being used to implement programs in *Brockton, Gardner, Winthrop, Revere, Lawrence, Salem, New Bedford, Amherst, Norwood, Stoughton, Northampton.* and *Tewksbury*. The communities you represent rely on these grants to provide this crucial service.

Expanding access to voluntary community-based crisis services and alternative emergency response strategies achieves several critical public policy goals: reducing law enforcement use of violence, diverting those in need of behavioral health interventions from incarceration to community services, and promoting more equitable outcomes for individuals with psychiatric conditions, including those from historically marginalized communities.

Matching grant funds are critical to the continuation and development these programs, as access to funding is scarce, especially for lower-income municipalities. Contrary to the language

in the Governor's FY24 budget proposal, this funding was never intended to be a onetime disbursement, but rather an ongoing investment. Community-based crisis-response models are endorsed by a wide array of organizations and have been successfully implemented in numerous cities and towns nationwide. Massachusetts routinely leads the nation in compassionate and equitable policymaking, let us continue to do so in this lifesaving work.

We respectfully request you support at least level funding for Line-Item 4512-2020 Equitable Approaches to Public Safety program at \$3.61 Million. By dedicating funds in FY24 for alternative response models, and continuing to designate a preference for community based, unarmed responder models, the legislature can empower municipalities to implement responses tailored to and by their communities. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us, or any of the undersigned organizations, if you'd like more information or to further discuss these grant programs.

Sincerely,

Ivy Moody

Staff Attorney, Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee
imoody@mhlac.org

Phanide Simon-Ulysse

LICSW, Greater Boston Association of Black Social Workers
phanides@msn.com

Rebekah Gewirtz, MPA

Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers - MA & RI
rgewirtz.naswma@socialworkers.org

Mona Igram

Senior Attorney, Center for Public Representation
migram@cpr-ma.org

Mike Ryan

Deputy Legislative Director, American Civil Liberties Union-MA
MRyan@aclum.org

R Feynman

Senior Community Organizer, Disability Policy Consortium
rfeynman@dpcma.org

CC:

Speaker of the House Ron Mariano
Rep. Aaron Michlewitz, Chair, House Committee on Ways & Means
Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante, Vice-Chair, House Committee on Ways & Means
John Walsh, Chief of Staff, Office of Speaker of the House Ronald Mariano
Whitney Ferguson, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of Speaker of the House Ronald Mariano
Brian Donahue, Budget Director, Office of House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz
Blake Webber, Chief of Staff, Office of House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz
Kathleen Healy, Chief of Staff, Office of Vice-Chair Ann-Margaret Ferrante

1. **City of Brockton** awarded \$450,000
2. **City of Gardner** awarded \$210,000
3. **Town of Winthrop** awarded \$449,825
4. **City of Revere** awarded \$329,000
5. **City of Lawrence** awarded \$450,000
6. **City of Salem** awarded \$81,583
7. **City of New Bedford** awarded \$450,000
8. **Town of Amherst** awarded \$449,949
9. **Town of Norwood** awarded \$450,000
10. **Town of Stoughton** awarded \$337,500
11. **Town of Tewksbury** awarded \$418,411
12. **City of Northampton** awarded \$450,000