Charter Amendment – Community Crisis Response Services

Title: The Community Crisis Response Amendment. An amendment to the Columbus City Charter to enhance services for responses to 911 calls and other calls for assistance, including but not limited to crises pertaining to behavioral health, homelessness, and others that may be nonviolent, by deploying the most appropriate intervention available; establishing the framework for the creation of a department, division, or office to implement, develop, and sustain the community crisis response system; establishing an advisory board to make recommendations regarding the system; and outlining processes to fund, develop, implement, and sustain the system.

Sec. 218 – Community crisis response system; purpose.

A comprehensive system of crisis response services is hereby established to:

a. Provide and facilitate responses to persons in crisis available as needed 24 hours a day/7 days a week using specialized, appropriate, and the least invasive non-police intervention available for situations that do not involve substantial risk of death or bodily harm to persons, including but not limited to, crisis involving behavioral health and/or homelessness;

b. Integrate and coordinate dispatching protocols, crisis services, and relevant programming across relevant community partners and city, county, state, and federal agencies;

c. Prioritize standardized training, safety standards, and program models that are person-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally-competent, and that align with relevant government regulations and best practices as well as professional and accreditation standards in the fields of public safety, crisis intervention, behavioral health, and other relevant fields.

Sec. 219 – Establishment of the community crisis response system

City Council shall establish by ordinance the following:

a. Creation of a department, division, or office to implement, develop, and sustain the community crisis response system, in collaboration and coordination with relevant community partners, crisis hotlines, and city, county, state, and federal agencies

b. The department, division, or office shall have at minimum the following responsibilities:

i. Provide and facilitate responses to persons in crisis using specialized, appropriate, and the least invasive non-police intervention available for situations that do not involve substantial risk of death or bodily harm to persons, including but not limited to, crises involving behavioral health and/or homelessness;

ii. Design non-police crisis response teams to act as presumptive first responders where appropriate, which may include but is not limited to clinicians, community response workers, case managers, and trained peer support workers;

iii. Develop a set of integrated crisis services that include, but are not limited to: screening, assessment, stabilization, and de-escalation; transportation and transport services where requested and as authorized; and follow-up support and connection to services.
iv. Collaborate and coordinate with all emergency call and dispatch services and crisis hotlines to align protocols and identify, assess, and route appropriate calls for assistance;
v. Contract or partner externally where necessary for safety, legal, financial, or clinical considerations,
vi. Collect data and make public annual evaluation and continuous improvement reports, in collaboration with the advisory board, including analysis of volume and types of calls received, call diversion, triage, risk assessment, service provision and usage, demographics, and response times, subject to the restrictions of applicable federal and state law.
vii. Conduct proactive community outreach.

c. No provision of this section shall be construed to diminish any existing or future collective bargaining agreement, preexisting staffing or compensation decisions, or rights of employees of the City of Columbus.

Sec. 220 – Community crisis response advisory board

There shall be a community crisis response advisory board to oversee planning, implementation, and sustainability of the community crisis response system, which shall be comprised of an odd number of members, a majority of whom shall constitute a quorum. The board shall advise the Mayor and City Council on the community crisis response system, funding, services, evaluation, and coordination and perform such other duties consistent with the provisions of this Charter as may be authorized by ordinance.

The Mayor and City Council shall make appointments, following an open application process. The members shall be representative of the diverse communities within the City of Columbus on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, disability, ethnicity, age, familial status, military status, socioeconomic status, geographic region, lived experience of crises, and professional experience.

The members shall include representatives from relevant collective bargaining units.

The board shall meet at least quarterly.

Sec. 221 – Funding

Funding shall be appropriated on an annual basis in an amount sufficient to pay for the personnel, services, and other resources necessary for the planning, implementation, and sustainability of community crisis response system. Funding shall grow over time in a manner consistent with inflation and service utilization.

Annual appropriations shall not be reduced from the prior budget year unless warranted by exigent financial circumstances such as an overall reduction to the City's budget, in the event of which, the annual appropriation for services shall not be reduced in an amount disproportionate to the overall impact of financial challenges on city expenditures. The Mayor shall set forth the basis for any reduction in writing to the Council at the time of submission or adoption, as applicable, of any budget or budget modification.

No provision of this section shall be construed to disallow the City from structuring services in such a manner that qualifies them for non-City funding sources.