BACKGROUND

This ordinance provides for the submission to the electors of the city of Columbus the question of amending the Charter of the City of Columbus, as relates to community crisis response services.

For the past several years, cites across the country, including Columbus, have looked to reimagine public safety. This includes how cities respond to calls for service. Police, as well as firefighters, had long been asked to respond to any calls that came through for service, whether they be emergency or non-emergency. This had them doing not only their assigned duties, but also required them to act as social workers, behavioral health specialists, mediators, and the like. Police and Fire have been required to respond to crisis calls that involved behavioral health, homelessness, and similar situations. And, in some tragic circumstances, the response of armed law enforcement escalated the situations, resulting in injuries and sometimes even deaths.

During an extensive, multi-year engagement with stakeholders including City officials, safety forces, community activists, faith leaders and others, City Council has enacted several different policy and programming reforms that seek to change how Police and Fire interact with residents, including the creation of a civilian police review board, requirements for how to interact with non-violent protestors, and funding alternative response services such as Mobile Crisis Response, RREACT, and an upcoming medical triage line.

To continue its mission to ensure that every resident receives the right response by the right professional for these calls for service, Council is proposing an amendment to the City Charter that establishes a community crisis response service system for the City. This includes the creation of an internal office, division, or department that would coordinate and collaborate around the provision of these services, as appropriate. The amendment would also establish an advisory board to oversee and make recommendations in this effort, as well as mandating funding for community crisis response system operations.

Pursuant to Section 45 of the City Charter, this council will submit “Proposed Charter Amendment No. 2, Community Crisis Response Services” to the electors at a regular municipal election to be called and held no less than 60 nor more than 120 days from passage of this ordinance. However, given that there is no regular municipal election in 2026, a special election must be called and this question will be submitted to electors at said special election to be held concurrently with the regular primary election on May 5, 2026.

To submit to the electors of the city of Columbus at a special election to be held concurrently with the regular primary election on May 5, 2026, the question of amending the Charter of the City of Columbus, such question to be known as "Proposed Charter Amendment No. 2, Community Crisis Response Services.”

WHEREAS, for the past several years, cites across the country, including Columbus, have looked to reimagine public safety; and

WHEREAS, during an extensive, multi-year engagement with stakeholders including City officials, safety forces,

community activists, faith leaders and others, City Council has enacted several different policy and programming reforms; and

WHEREAS, to continue its mission to ensure that every resident receives the right response by the right professional for these calls for service, Council is proposing an amendment to the Charter that establishes a community crisis response service system for the City; and

WHEREAS, since no regular municipal election will be held in 2026, a special election shall be called to place the proposed charter amendment on the May 5, 2026 ballot at a special election to be held concurrently with the primary election, per Section 45-2 of the City Charter; and

WHEREAS, Section 42-12 of the Charter of the City of Columbus requires that it is immediately necessary to authorize submission of Proposed Charter Amendment No. 2, Community Crisis Response Services to the electors to assure timely filing with the boards of elections for placement on the May 5, 2026 ballot; **NOW, THEREFORE**;

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. The city council hereby finds that a regular municipal election will not be held in 2026. Therefore, pursuant to City Charter Section 45-2, a special election is hereby called to place the question hereinafter set forth on the May 5, 2026 ballot to be held concurrently with the general election, a date which is not less than 60 nor more than 120 days from passage of this ordinance.

SECTION 2. That there be submitted to the electors of the city of Columbus the question of amending the Charter of the City of Columbus, such question and proposed amendments being set forth as an attachment (FINAL PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CHARTER Community Crisis Response Services) hereto and hereby made a part hereof.

SECTION 3. That the question submitted in Section 2 be and hereby is known as "Proposed Charter Amendment No. 2, Community Crisis Response Services."

SECTION 4. That the city clerk is directed to forthwith serve a certified copy of this ordinance upon the boards of elections of Franklin County, Delaware County, and Fairfield County, Ohio.

SECTION 5. That the boards of elections of Franklin County, Delaware County, and Fairfield County, Ohio be and hereby are requested to place the question, "Proposed Charter Amendment No. 2, Community Crisis Response Services" upon the ballot to be submitted to the electors as provided for and upon the date set forth herein.

SECTION 6. That in the event the Charter Amendment is adopted by the electorate, the Department of Public Safety, Columbus Public Health, and any other applicable department, division, or office as may be further designated by ordinance of Council, are directed to develop a plan for a community crisis response services system, inclusive of non-police crisis teams, to be operational by February 1, 2028 and to be available as needed twenty four hours a day and seven days a week by February 1, 2030.

SECTION 7. That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to take immediate effect and be in force from and after passage, pursuant to Section 42-12 of the Charter of the City of Columbus.