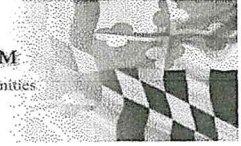


SUPPORT SB 305 - Establishing Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM
Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



TO: Chair Will Smith and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Jenny Zito, MAJR Executive Committee
DATE: February 11, 2020

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) supports SB 305 as an important step toward developing strong Crisis Intervention Teams functioning in the entire state and utilizing best practices.

Currently in Maryland, when police are called to public places or homes to handle crisis situations created by individuals with drug or alcohol problems, abusive behavior, or mental illness, these situations often lead to criminal charges instead of addressing the underlying causes with treatment. Furthermore, the possible services available in each county may not be familiar to responders and may even be hard to discover when searching for resources.

Some states, such as Virginia, have made concerted state-wide efforts to train Crisis Intervention Teams that combine police and mental health professionals to help de-escalate crisis situations and divert people to social services such as drug/alcohol treatment, mental health evaluation and treatment, or to counseling or mediation. Training these teams, providing extra personal, and funding social service programs can have a substantial cost, but have proven to be cost effective in the long run because of improved functionality of individuals in their families and communities, and the reduced costs to the state related to crime and incarceration.

Programs for assistance or treatment of people in crisis situations vary significantly depending on Maryland locality. Among the types of assistance programs that exist in some counties are: drug/alcohol abuse programs, mental health treatment programs, domestic violence/abuser programs, anger management programs, parenting classes, employment training, homeless services, veteran's services, victim-offender mediation, family mediation, restorative justice programs, and prostitution prevention programs. Central coordination would be very helpful to making sure that a wide variety of programs are available in all locations and easy to locate and use by law enforcement, behavioral health agencies and crisis service providers. By forming a Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence the state can provide much needed centralization and provide resources and technical support. The Center will reduce the total cost to the state of creating excellent programs throughout the state by reducing duplication of effort.

Most importantly, the Center will serve to distribute best practices and working models for strong Crisis Intervention Team programs to be formed more quickly throughout the state and will reduce the number of people being placed in jails and prisons who are primarily in need of treatment or services that could improve their ability to be functional and to contribute.

We hope you will vote to pass this strong step toward a better Maryland.

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) is a nonpartisan association of over fifty community organizations and churches with members in every part of the state, formed to support justice reinvestment. Individual supporters include judges, attorneys, corrections professionals, as well as returning citizens, victims, and service providers.

SUPPORT SB 305 - Establishing Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence (from MAJR)

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