



Where friends work together in dignity and respect

November 4, 2021

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Michigan House Health Policy Committee,

My name is Summer Berman and I am the Director of Fresh Start Clubhouse in Washtenaw County. I'm also on the Board of Clubhouse Michigan, the coalition of Clubhouse Psychosocial Rehabilitation programs across the state of Michigan.

Michigan has over 40 Clubhouses, operated in partnership with our Community Mental Health system, which provide a supportive community for people with mental health diagnoses and assist them to achieve lives that are both socially satisfying and vocationally meaningful.

Unfortunately, sometimes when a person with serious mental illness is struggling with symptoms, they are forced into a system that was not designed to meet their needs. We know what happens too often when we treat a mental health crisis like a crime instead of a situation that requires care. According to statistics collected by the Washington Post, at least 1 in every 4 people killed in an interaction with law enforcement has a serious mental illness.

One member of our Clubhouse has been handcuffed and put in police custody multiple times due to "unusual" behavior in the community which prompted a citizen to call 911. He counts himself lucky for not having been seriously physically harmed during these incidents during which he was experiencing a mental health crisis and was in need of clinical care. Others with co-occurring drug addiction or homelessness have not been as fortunate. Sometimes these police interactions result in criminal charges *making future employment even more difficult for people who already face barriers to entry into the workforce.*

By sending peers and health professionals to respond to these situations instead of police, we can reduce the likelihood of violence and help get people the care they need. Other communities that support a similar care response, such as Seattle, Denver, and Eugene, Oregon, with its CAHOOTS program, demonstrate that **care response programs can save money, save lives, and reduce drag on a police system not designed to respond to health crises.** We think Michigan citizens - and taxpayers - deserve a chance at similar benefits.

I urge you to support Sen. Chang and Sen. Outman's bills, which were unanimously passed in the Senate. They will help transform the lives of people with mental health issues. Please support this life-changing and life-saving legislation.

Respectfully,

Summer M. Berman, LMSW
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