

# Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-972

AN ACT CONCERNING CRISIS INTERVENTION TRAINING FOR POLICE OFFICERS AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN POLICE OFFICERS AND

**Title:** SOCIAL WORKERS.

**Vote Date:** 3/16/2023

**Vote Action:** JOINT FAVORABLE

**PH Date:** 2/23/2023

**File No.:** 379

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Public Safety and Security Committee

### **Co-Sponsors:**

[Sen. Herron Gaston, 23rd Dist.](#)

[Rep. Fred Gee, 126th Dist.](#)

[Sen. Christine Cohen, 12th Dist.](#)

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill will require that on and after July 1, 2024, there will be curriculum that will include crisis intervention strategies for police. Mental health crises are on the rise in Connecticut, this bill will train police how to approach the situation in the best way to deescalate and get the person the help they require. This curriculum will be written after collaborating with persons who have mental and physical disabilities.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

### **Nancy Navaretta, MA, LPC, NCC, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**

Commissioner Navaretta writes that currently DMHAS works closely with first responders, including police to ensure those with behavioral disorders who are in crisis receive appropriate assistance. DHMAS recognizes the importance of law enforcement training to be sure that officers respond in the appropriate manner when an individual is in a crisis. DHMAS has contracted with Connecticut Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement, Inc. (CABLE) and to provide training on the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT). This training prepares law enforcement to recognize and intervene in an appropriate and sensitive manner to those

experiencing distress. SB972 Section 2 is unnecessary as this is already implemented and funded by DMHAS.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Senator Christine Cohen, State of Connecticut**

Sen. Cohen supports this bill. Sen. Cohen applauds the work that Connecticut Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement (CABLE) has done to train police officers as well as the support given by the Connecticut State Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST). The demand for classes exceeds the offerings due to funding. We also need to continue to promote collaboration between mental health professionals and law enforcement. Sen. Cohen would like changes to the proposed bill to include resources for POST and CABLE to continue their work on crisis intervention.

### **Marc DeGregorio, President, NAMI, Elm City**

Mr. DeGregorio supports this bill. As a mental health advocate and talking to many families who have had to interact with police, this training will do good when it comes in confrontations with police when people are in crisis. Mr. DeGregorio also supports Denise Paley from NAMI shoreline.

### **Elaine Dove, Social Worker and Police Commissioner**

Ms. Dove supports this bill. Ms. Dove states that no one can expect the unexpected events of a crisis, but it is far better when police and others are trained in crisis intervention. Police are always expected to act appropriately and when there is a crisis, police who are trained will have a better outcome.

### **Grace Grinnell**

Ms. Grinnell supports this bill. She has been a faculty member of CABLE for the last 7 years and is Co-Vice President of the National Alliance on Mental Illness Farmington Valley Affiliate. It is not necessary to reinvent the wheel when it comes to CABLE as they have been doing CIT for the last 23 years. What is needed is an organization like CABLE that will continue to provide high quality training to law enforcement so that good outcomes are ensured. Ms. Grinnell asks that the state continue to support CABLE and the work they do.

### **Cheryl Wilson, LCSW, MBA, President/Stephen Wanczyk-Karp, LMSW, Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Connecticut Chapter**

NASW supports this bill with a revision. Collaboration of police with social workers is expanding in Connecticut. There is an increase in municipalities that successfully utilize social workers. NASW would like to see this bill passed with one revision. This bill currently calls upon POST to guide law enforcement units to include recommendations of how police can collaborate with social workers. NASW/CT would like this guidance to be in consultation with social workers. How can POST offer guidance without social work professionals?

### **Erica Kayne**

Ms. Kayne supports this bill. As a clinical social worker, Ms. Kayne has worked with multiple clients that would have benefited from interactions with police who were trained in crisis intervention and collaborative with social workers.

**Kate Lee**

Ms. Lee supports this bill. This bill's strategies of how police officers and social workers can work together would save lives and get people the help they need.

**Laura Noe**

Ms. Noe supports this bill. From personal experience with her brother, Ms. Noe knows that getting help for those in need is a collaboration. CIT is a partnership model and follows evidence-based practices. This model is proven, and she has her brother back through these collaborative efforts.

**Denise Paley, Mother-Advocate, Advisory Board Member of DMHAS, Board Member of Nami Shoreline**

Ms. Paley supports this bill. This her 3<sup>rd</sup> year testifying before the committee in favor of CIT for police officers. Ms. Paley's son had a mental health crisis which she feels CIT would have helped, she believes that the officers did their best with the training they had, but it wasn't enough to help her son. The officers involved were not trained sufficiently to recognize the crisis. Now years later he is still navigating his mental health through the Department of Corrections. If the officers had CIT, they could have protected her son and avoided a wake of unrelenting pain and suffering, mostly for Ellis. As a state we need to do better, and officers should be trained to recognize and address someone in a mental health crisis.

**Louise Pyers, M.S., B.C.E.T.S., Founder, CT Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement**

Ms. Pyers supports this bill. An important issue is police training, law enforcement face challenges that lay people will not face in their lifetime. Since 2004, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services have provided funding to CABLE to provide Crisis Intervention Training. Ms. Pyers highly recommends that DMHAS be included in curriculum development. Crisis Intervention Training needs to be consistent across the board. The new collaboration models are promising for law enforcement and for those struggling with mental health conditions.

**John Rich, Chief of Police, Ledyard Police Department**

Mr. Rich is in support of this bill. Mr. Rich is a thirty-five-year veteran of Connecticut and states he has benefitted from Crisis Intervention Training from the Connecticut Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement. As Chief of Police, I try to get my officers, supervisors, and Emergency Communications Dispatchers to attend CIT. The model in our community is very effective as we have CIT clinicians ride with our officers weekly, they arrange and provide ongoing services for our community and those who have mental health challenges. Many communities have the resources to work with their police departments, but for those that lack the funds there should be a partnership with DMHAS.

**Dr. David E. Sloane, Retired professor**

Dr. Sloane is in support of this bill. Dr. Sloane states, "all police EVERYWHERE" should have crisis-intervention training. Police not trained will continue to kill people because they cannot talk them down.

**Carol Scully, Director of Advocacy, The Arc of Connecticut, Inc.**

Ms. Scully is in support of this bill. Arc would like the bill amended to include persons with mental or intellectual development disabilities/development disabilities and physical disabilities. During their lifetime people with these disabilities are more likely to meet law

enforcement either as a victim or a perpetrator. The Arc of Connecticut urges passage of this bill with the amendment.

**Margaret Watt, NAMI, CT Public Policy Chair**

Ms. Watt is in support of this bill. Appropriate training for all police will help to deescalate a situation and give the people in crisis the ability to get the help they need and literally save lives.

**Vicky Sigworth, Hamden, CT**

Ms. Sigworth supports this bill. Ms. Sigworth feels fortunate that she lives in Hamden and is close to New Haven where the police receive excellent training. Over the years her son required mental health assistance and the police were able to deescalate the situation professionally. CIT needs to be available throughout the state.

**Jaime Rodriguez, LMFT, Advocacy Chair and Rebecca Ruitto, Chair, CTAMFT**

Mr. Rodriguez is in support of this bill. Mental health workers and police have been able to collaborate effectively in crisis intervention. Connecticut has six types of licensed mental health professionals, CTAMFT urges the committee to include all mental health providers in the collaboration.

**Dr. Hilda Speicher, Professor of Psychology, Albertus Magnus College**

Dr. Speicher is in support of this bill. Dr. Speicher believes all police officers should get CIT. This is the minimum that we should require, as it will keep our citizens safe, as well as our police officers. She strongly encourages that when a team responds to a situation it includes professionals that are primarily trained in this type of situation.

**Lisa Thomas, Chairwoman, Coventry Town Council**

Ms. Thomas is in support of this bill. Ms. Thomas requests that curriculum for crisis intervention include social work professionals. Currently, some of the services that are available in the Town of Coventry are funded by grants. Please be aware once the grant money is gone, these services need to continue.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Kathleen Flaherty, Esq., Executive Director, CT Legal Rights Project, Inc. (CLRP)**

Ms. Flaherty opposes this bill. In 2022, a bill was passed out of committee regarding police training, the bill Section 2 of PA 22-0064 addressed that POST would consult with persons with mental or physical disabilities and advocates on behalf of such person, develop a training curriculum for police officers regarding interactions with these citizens. This was a requirement, and this did not happen. Ms. Flaherty continues to testify that the nature of forced psychiatry causes harm. POST should be required to work with social workers and with people who live with mental health conditions. This would develop curriculum that would respect the citizens of Connecticut with disabilities.

**Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU Connecticut**

Ms. Zaccagnino is in support of this bill. ACLU Connecticut has concerns that this bill is not reducing the role of policing in our communities especially regarding those who are having a mental health crisis. ACLU feels that the committee should seek to relieve police of this duty.

**Reported by: Bonnie Gray, Assistant Clerk**

**Date:3/20/2023**