

March 2, 2021



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[SolvistaHealth.org](https://www.solvistahhealth.org)

Members of the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Appropriations Committee,

I am writing to voice my support for Colorado House Bill 21-1030, *Concerning Expanding the Peace Officers Mental Health Support Grant Program to Include Community Partners*. As the Executive Director for Solvista Health, a Community Mental Health Center, Licensed Substance Abuse Treatment Provider, and integrated Primary Care Medical Provider serving four rural and frontier Colorado counties, I have seen the remarkable and positive impacts of collaborative programs that address the intersection of behavioral health and criminal justice.

We currently have two separate partnerships with local law enforcement to support on-scene response for mental health related 9-1-1 calls – one with the Canon City Police Department, and the other with the Leadville Police Department and Lake County Sheriff's Office.

These collaborative programs have truly had life-changing and life-saving impacts. Not only have our trained behavioral health professionals been able to de-escalate individuals in crisis, but we have then been able to engage these same individuals into a host of ongoing clinical and non-clinical support services. The result: sustained recovery for individuals; fewer unnecessary arrests; decreased reliance on our criminal justice system to manage behavioral health issues; cost effectiveness; and healthier relationships with law enforcement.

Since realizing so much success in a short time, law enforcement officials in both of our existing programs are eager to expand and put even more co-responder teams on the street. Our neighboring rural counties are taking notice as well and hoping resources will become available to bring these types of programs, rooted deeply in partnership with other providers, to their communities.

It is time to redefine the way our public safety system serves the community. We do this through collaboration that leverages the strengths of its partners, and that emphasizes the dignity, health, and wellbeing of those it seeks to protect and serve. I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB21-1030 so that we can expand the great work underway in our state and help even more Coloradans in need.

Sincerely,

*Brian Turner*

Brian Turner  
Executive Director  
Solvista Health

March 2, 2021

Dear Members of the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee,

My name is Max Cohen and I am a private citizen of Leadville, Colorado. I am writing in support of HB21-1030, *Concerning Expanding the Peace Officers Mental Health Support Grant Program to Include Community Partners*.

After suffering a violent, life-threatening trauma, I was saved by the on-call general surgeon at St. Vincent's Hospital in Frisco. Days later in the ICU, the surgeon told me had I arrived 5 minutes later I would not be here. In the aftermath of trying to recover from that incident, I developed an acute and severe case of PTSD, which encouraged my substance abuse issues. I spiraled from not good but maintaining, to full on collapse. I became unable to tell when I was drunk, high, or normal. The substance abuse would trigger a PTSD episode and my brain leaving the world of reality, into PTSD fantasy land. Seeking therapy and having a couple of sessions of EMDR helped me to cope until September of 2019 when, after a bad interaction calling 911, the alcohol and PTSD pushed me into a downward spiral. I attempted to take my life later that evening.

Due to a chance physical response, I threw up the pills I had taken and passed out before the deed was done. Thankfully, one of my closest friends in town realized the state I was in and knew what I had attempted to do. She called the Leadville Police who initiated a mental health co-response team to come out and contact me. Cpt. Collins, who had been the primary investigator for my case, and Dan, a mental health clinician with Solvista Health, contacted me through my open bedroom window early the next morning when I was unable to come to the front door. After a period of conversation, they made me feel comfortable coming out and letting the EMT's take me to the hospital. I received an evaluation and was eventually released. Two days later, in another PTSD episode, I was arrested for DUI after helping a stranded motorist by the ranger station in town.

At that point I knew that something needed to change, and that I would try my best to make that change. I received multiple follow up calls from Julie, a peer specialist at Solvista, and built a relationship with Sean, another peer from Solvista. I was given continued support from Dan at Solvista and our local prosecutor Lauren. Without this, I doubt I would be writing this account today. I was able to receive the space and help I needed to move onto a path of recovery from PTSD and substance abuse. This is thanks to the mental health crisis co-response team, law enforcement's willingness to use it, the follow up contacts from crisis peers, and a court system focused on restorative justice. I once again felt a sense of hope in my own ability to recover.

Now, in February 2021, I have been clean and sober for over a year. I am on my way to graduating from Lake County Sobriety Court and becoming a peer specialist myself. I hope to become a fully certified addiction counselor. I found that I am talented and capable at helping others to deal with and overcome their mental health and substance abuse diseases, because I was able to receive this help from these people. I now spend my time chairing our Leadville Lake County Law Enforcement Community Board working to build trust between the community and law enforcement through communication and expansion of the mental health crisis response model.

I share my story because I am proof that co-response works. Follow-up care by people just like me works. If my story can help others realize the critical importance of supporting and expanding these programs, then I feel as though my experience will have been worth it.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB21-1030.

Respectfully,

Max Cohen

Chair

Leadville-Lake County Law Enforcement Community Board

I'm writing to ask the committee not to pass HB21-1030 as it is written.

Like many of your constituents and yourselves, I want safer communities and I support and fight for racial justice. Not that long ago, the phrase "defund the police" actually made me really nervous. Because as a white person, I was taught that police = safety. But the truth is, police DO NOT make the community safer for everyone. Time and time and time again, police in our very own state have harmed our Black and Brown communities.

We cannot have heavily armed law enforcement responding to social work calls; when you're designed to be hammer, everything looks like a nail. Imagine if a social worker had responded to the call about Elijah McClain; they would have found a young man dancing and let him on his way. Imagine the same for Michael Marshall, or Marvin Booker or the dozens of other Black and Brown Coloradoans who would absolutely still be with us instead of dead at the hands of the state.

I've never been prouder to be a Coloradan than when Leslie Herod's Law Enforcement Accountability bill passed this summer. The country is watching us. Let's keep that momentum going; let's be a state that truly prioritizes the safety of all of its community members. Let's be honest about what police cannot effectively do. Amend this bill to remove the money for police and put it in the hands of community-responders.

## House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services

### Testimony - HB21-1030 Expanding Peace Officers Mental Hlth Grant Prog

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Testifying</b>
Elisabeth	Epps	Against	Colorado Freedom Fund	In Person
Chris	Covey	For	Colorado State Patrol	In Person
Michael	Guzman	For	Summit County Sheriff's Office Smart Team	In Person
Russel	Snider	For	Summit County Sheriff's Office SMART team	In Person
Rosa	McDonald	For	Summit County Sheriff's SMART team	In Person
Brian	Loma	Against	Self	In Person
Debbie	Stafford	For	Aurora Mental Health	In Person
Marchell	Taylor	For	AYBOS Marketing	In Person
Bruce	Eisenhauer	Questions Only	Dept of Local Affairs	In Person
Corey	Shively	For	AYBOS Marketing	In Person
Marchell	Taylor	For	AYBOS Marketing	In Person
Chris	Gulli	For	Colorado Fraternal Order of Police	In Person
Dan	Brite	For	Colorado Fraternal Order of Police	In Person
Jaime	FitzSimons	For	County Sheriffs of Colorado	In Person
Rebecca	Wallace	Against	ACLU-CO	In Person
Kara	Heller	For	Colorado Coalition for the Homeless	In Person
Denise	Maes	Against	ACLU-CO	In Person
Lauren	Snyder	For	Mental Health Colorado	Remotely
Ronald	Sloan	For	Colorado Assn. of Chiefs of Police	Remotely
Marlo	Alston	For	Colorado Municipal League	Remotely
Tamara	Pogue	For	CCAT/ CCI	Remotely
Elisabeth	Epps	Against	Colorado Freedom Fund	Remotely
Melanie	Kesner	Against	Interfaith Alliance of Colorado	Remotely
Brittany	Fritsch	Amend	Self	Remotely
Andrew	McNulty	Against	Lawyers Civil Rights Coalition	Remotely
Allison	Hiltz	Amend	Self	Remotely
Kara	Heller	For	Colorado Coalition for the Homeless	Remotely
Bill	Clayton	For	Colorado Police Protective Assn	Remotely

## Witness Signup List

<b>Jaime</b>	<b>Horsfall</b>	<b>For</b>	Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Danny</b>	<b>Veith</b>	<b>For</b>	Denver Police Protective Association	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Eva</b>	<b>Frickle</b>	<b>Against</b>	JeffcoCan, West Metro Resistance, Indivisible CD7	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Michelle</b>	<b>Hoy</b>	<b>For</b>	Mind Springs Health	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Apryl</b>	<b>Alexander</b>	<b>Amend</b>	Black Lives Matter 5280	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Emily</b>	<b>Adams</b>	<b>Amend</b>	Self	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Jennifer</b>	<b>Dillon</b>	<b>Against</b>	Self	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Luke</b>	<b>Rosenmayer</b>	<b>Amend</b>	Self	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Danny</b>	<b>Veith</b>	<b>For</b>	Denver Police Protective Association	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Jay</b>	<b>Flynn</b>	<b>For</b>	Mental Health	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Ari</b>	<b>Harms</b>	<b>Amend</b>	Self	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Zack</b>	<b>Burley</b>	<b>Amend</b>	Self	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Juan</b>	<b>Marcano</b>	<b>Amend</b>	Self	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Alison</b>	<b>Coombs</b>	<b>Amend</b>	Self	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Hilary</b>	<b>Cooper</b>	<b>For</b>	San Miguel County/CCI	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Lydia</b>	<b>Waligorski</b>	<b>For</b>	Violence Free Colorado	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Alexander</b>	<b>Landau</b>	<b>Against</b>	Denver Justice Project	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Vinnie</b>	<b>Cervantes</b>	<b>Against</b>	DASHR	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Cory</b>	<b>Christensen</b>	<b>For</b>	Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police	<b>Remotely</b>
<b>Eli</b>	<b>Hekel</b>	<b>Amend</b>	Self	Submitted text

## Witness Signup List

Tiera Brown Against Self Submitted text

Sabrina Berntsen Amend Self Submitted text

Nichole Libby Amend Self Submitted text

## Witness Signup List

Bruce

Young

Amend

Self

Submitted text

david

van'duzer

Amend

Self

Submitted text

## Witness Signup List

Pamela

Thompson

Amend

Self

Submitted text

## Witness Signup List

Kiarra	Osakue	Amend	Self	Submitted text
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Sarah	Budisavljevic	Against	Self	Submitted text
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Julie	Love	Amend	Self	Submitted text
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Brian	Turner	For	Solvista Health	Uploaded file
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Max	Cohen	For	Self	Uploaded file
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## Witness Signup List

Jessie      Broom      Against      Self      Uploaded file

## Witness Signup List

### Text of Testimony

## Witness Signup List

As a Black Lives Matter supporter, I'm concerned with how this bill is currently written. I genuinely believe in the goal of defunding the police and spinning up replacement community response teams with different incentives, motives, and institutional culture. While I appreciate that funding for those teams is at least possible under this bill, this still increases the money we spend on police: it sets aside two million dollars to solely benefit police before it even allows community response team partnerships to apply for some of the remaining funds. This isn't a model I support, I take issue with this fund being shared between police and community teams in the first place, but even allowing that, this hugely tips the scales in favor of peace officers over community response teams.

Police budgets across the state have increased massively over the last few decades, well out of proportion to the crimes they're meant to address or even the other services they provide. I want accountability for that money, in the long run I want to see fewer officers with less fancy gear, but better trained and better taken care of. But that can all be done with the money already set aside for them.

In short, at a bare minimum I would like to see the two million dollar set aside in (7)(d) reduced or eliminated in an amendment. With that change, this bill is at least palatable for me. I also suggest that we allow community response teams to apply directly for funds without needing to ask through a law enforcement agency.

## Witness Signup List

NAME,

I want to take this time today to submit my position as AGAINST this HB. I am a resident of Denver, a recent law grad, and a future attorney. I am against giving more funding to police overall, but especially in this capacity. Just two weeks ago I had a mental health related panic attack while studying for the bar exam and exacerbated by physical health conditions. I was told by the attending nurse at Denver Health to call 911. I told the nurse I would take the risk of dying in my home before I ever called the police to enter my home and "help" me. I've had multiple interactions with police in Colorado who know me to be someone with relevant mental health issues, and they have only made the crisis WORSE, on a number of occasions. Hardly anyone in my already over-policed community would willingly call police to help with mental health needs. Police don't need more money to step into the role of mental health provider. They need to out of this realm completely. I would have supported this bill if this were my name is Sabrina Berntsen and I live in Denver in zip code 80220 and I'm writing to oppose HB21-1030 as it is currently written.

In its current form, HB21-1030 increases police funding while providing no support to community responder programs.

Our community-based programs and co-responder programs are already proving to be safer and more effective at performing social work than sending heavily funded and heavily armed law enforcement officers. If our goal is to fund community response, we need to do it separately from law enforcement funding, and create guaranteed funding for community responders.

We hope amendments can redirect this bill so that it supports community-based solutions, but as it stands, 1030 is not ready to pass.

Thank you

Peace officers should not be the ones responding to the community's social service and health disorder needs. Peace officers are not only poorly trained for these situations, but they cannot become well trained as they are currently required to fill too many roles. While communities of color and disabled people are most frequently harmed by the inappropriate response by peace officers instead of community public safety, they do irreparable harm to all communities.

When I was 3 years old, my mother had recently left my father for abuse and for trying to force her to abort my sibling. The courts mandated visitation with my father despite his admission to alcoholism and use of cocaine. At his house, I regularly saw him beat his next wife and threaten her with a handgun, and every time we left the trailer I watched him put a whiskey and pepsi into the car, and then put me in the car too. There was no stability in my life because one of the places I was legally required to go was unsafe and unpredictable. This, naturally, resulted in significant behavioral issues for me as a toddler. I used to have long, loud tantrums. At my mom's house, I could be heard from inside neighbors' standalone single family homes. One day, one of those neighbors called the police.

The peace officer came to the door and I answered it. After asking me if someone was hurting me and being told no, he threatened to take me away from my mom if he ever had to come back to the house because of my tantrums. This adult man wearing a gun threatened a 3 year old child with losing the one safe, constant adult in their life. He did not help, he traumatized me. I am 31 years old and I am still terrified of cops to this day. We did not need a peace officer to come instill fear in me. We needed

## Witness Signup List

HELLO,

I'm adding my voice in opposition to this bill as currently written.

The overall intent of driving more mental health resources is laudable but the vehicles used for this funding are problematic. The agencies being funded should not be tied to LE organizations or their affiliates but instead should be open for direct application by all groups that can service these mental health needs and related situations.

If you remove these restrictions and provide community-based oversight to fund distribution, I believe this would be a bill that should proceed but it can't under its current form.

Thank you for your consideration.

As currently written, this bill is simply going to give more money to police departments with no accountability on improved outcomes for the problem described in section 1. It does not support community mental health, or address its stated purpose.

The bill in its current state does not *require* that law enforcement organizations partner with other organizations to get these funds, nor does it require that law enforcement organizations reduce their response to "societal issue calls" or replace themselves as the first responder for those calls, the stated intent of the bill. In fact most of the things the money can be used for are mental health support services FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS -- not for the people experiencing societal issues.

The bill ought to look something like this:

1. REQUIRE a non-police response partnership to get the funds.
2. REQUIRE that the police response to "societal issue calls" be reduced by the partnership in order to get funds for new programs, and show a proven reduction in order to continue to get funds for existing programs.
3. REQUIRE the majority of the funds go to staffing and funding the replacing partnership organization's activities, not the law enforcement organization. Any costs covered for the law enforcement organization MUST be clearly related to the partnership.
4. ALLOW partner organizations to apply for funds themselves without having to rely on the law enforcement departments -- it needs to put partner organizations on equal footing with law enforcement organizations.
5. It should MAYBE fund training for officers on how to identify societal issue calls, like mental health crises, and to handle them differently.

Furthermore, it SHOULD NOT fund services FOR law enforcement officers. It SHOULD NOT fund anything to do with officer related shootings or use of force, and

## Witness Signup List

My name is Pamela Thompson and I'm a constituent from Colorado House District 24.

I wanted to encourage you to not pass HB 1030 through the Health & Human Services committee without significant amendments.

The bill as written gives money to the policy with no accountability. It does not address its stated purpose..

The intro to the bill sets up an important purpose, to address the fact that there are societal problems for which the police are not the answer.

But reading the rest of the text of the bill it appears to assume that if counseling services and training are available to the police they will become the right organization to respond to these societal issues. It only funds police organizations or through police organizations, it does not fund organizations outside of the police that would be better suited to handle the types of issues the bill is about.

This bill should:

REQUIRE a response partnership to get the funds..

REQUIRE that the police response to societal issue calls are expected to be reduced by the partnership in order to get funds for new programs.

REQUIRE the majority of the funds go to staffing and funding the replacing partnership organization's activities.

ALLOW partner organizations to apply for funds themselves without having to rely on the law enforcement departments.

This fund should not fund services for law enforcement officers. Support for law officers is already funded. Job stress and lack of police officer access to counseling is not the root of the problem described in section 1 of the bill, and funds for those things will not have a meaningful impact on it.

In order to achieve the purpose outlined in section 1, this bill must fund services that help people experiencing societal issues avoid unnecessary interactions with law enforcement, and subsequently to get access to the services they need.

Thank you for your work on this important committee,

Pamela Thompson

## Witness Signup List

I encourage you to not pass HB 1000 through the Health & Human Services committee without significant amendments.

As currently written, this bill is simply going to give more money to police departments with no accountability on improved outcomes for the problem described in section 1. It does not support community mental health, or address its stated purpose.

The bill in its current state does not require that law enforcement organizations partner with other organizations to get these funds, nor does it require that law enforcement organizations reduce their response to "societal issue calls" or replace themselves as the first responder for those calls, the stated intent of the bill. In fact most of the things the money can be used for are mental health support services FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS -- not for the people experiencing societal issues.

The bill ought to look something like this:

1. REQUIRE a non-police response partnership to get the funds. 2. REQUIRE that the police response to "societal issue calls" be reduced by the partnership in order to get funds for new programs, and show a proven reduction in order to continue to get funds for existing programs.
3. REQUIRE the majority of the funds go to staffing and funding the replacing partnership organization's activities, not the law enforcement organization. Any costs covered for the law enforcement organization MUST be clearly related to the partnership.
4. ALLOW partner organizations to apply for funds themselves without having to rely on the law enforcement departments -- it needs to put partner organizations on equal footing with law enforcement organizations.
5. It should MAYBE fund training for officers on how to identify societal issue calls, like mental health crises, and to handle them differently.

To summarize: I don't believe job stress and lack of police officer access to counseling to be the root of the problem described in section 1 of the bill.

In order to achieve the purpose outlined in section 1, this bill must fund services that help PEOPLE EXPERIENCING SOCIETAL ISSUES avoid unnecessary interactions community mental wellness than helpful. We insist on:

1. Funding becoming open to entities that are not strictly law enforcement. If this bill is to support community partnerships, then funding must be open to the actual community partners.
2. Equal or majority funding going towards non-police models versus co-responder models. There should be a distinction between the two as they are not the same and while there has been positive impact from co-responder programs, we have heard from social workers that they are often inhibited from doing their jobs by the commanding presence of law enforcement.
3. Remove the required \$2 million set aside for law enforcement mental health as that would leave almost nothing for crisis response programs.
4. Finally, if legislators are to work to support local programs that are community partnerships, then there should be more due diligence in engaging with the municipalities and community organizations doing the work before moving this bill forward in any form.

Thank you,

Mental health professionals should be the ones showing up to help people with mental health issues. I'm actually not sure why anyone would want to argue with that. The r

## Witness Signup List

## Witness Signup List

### Registered

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