

January 16, 2024 Public Hearing for Bill 43-23, Crisis Intervention Team – Established
Favorable

1. Good afternoon, Council President Friedson and Councilmembers. I am Cari Guthrie, President and CEO of Cornerstone Montgomery a nonprofit that provides community- and evidence-based mental health and substance use disorder services. Our mission is to empower people living with mental health and substance use disorders to thrive in their community through collaboration, treatment, education, and advocacy.
2. Cornerstone Montgomery supports Bill 43-23 Crisis Intervention Team - Established because it would improve Montgomery County's response to individuals experiencing mental health and/or substance use crises using a model that has proven effective in other jurisdictions across the nation and right here in Maryland.
3. This bill would create co-responding Crisis Interventions Teams (CIT) as a joint program of the County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Police Department (MCPD). Each team would be composed of one clinician and one officer who co-locate, co-deploy, and co-respond to individuals who are experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis AND also pose a danger to themselves and/or others.
4. Since MCPD started training its officers in CIT, Cornerstone has made it a habit to ask for CIT officers to be deployed when possible, and it has made a noticeable difference in the outcomes of the calls. CIT trained officers are more likely to listen to what our staff has to say and work collaboratively to determine next steps. That means that our clients are not just taken to jail or an ED – we work together to figure out the best outcome for the client – including that they just stay home and get support from their treatment team.
5. This bill would not alter or interfere with the work of Montgomery County's Crisis Center or the clinician-only Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams (MCOTs). Rather, this bill would add another option for crisis response. Crises can present in a wide variety of ways, and the system must be flexible enough to meet folks where they are. CIT is a vital part of the larger landscape of interventions and wraparound services.
6. By supplementing and strengthening the resources we already have, this bill would address the wait time issues that our county's crisis response system currently suffers from which would allow for more access to more mobile crisis support options.
7. This bill would also require DHHS and MCPD to ratify an MOU that delineates individual and shared responsibilities; identifies opportunities for data and resource

sharing; and facilitates greater communication, collaboration, and trust between the departments. This bill would ensure that Montgomery County's crisis response system is organized and accessible.

8. Cornerstone Montgomery supports Bill 43-23 because it would create co-responding Crisis Intervention Teams, which are successful at deescalating dangerous situations, diverting individuals from the criminal justice system, and increasing access to needed follow-up services including supporting the least restrictive environment.