



## The Mental Health Justice Act

*Reps. Ayanna Pressley (MA-07), Katie Porter (CA-45), Tony Cárdenas (CA-29) and Mary Gay Scanlon (PA-05)*

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According to the Treatment Advocacy Center, 1 in 4 fatal police encounters ends the life of an individual with severe mental illness. At this rate, the risk of being killed is 16 times greater for individuals with untreated mental illness than for others approached or stopped by officers.

Those who are arrested are often charged with minor, nonviolent offenses, but as a result, our jail and prison systems are overcrowded with thousands of individuals who would be far better served by other community resources. The Mental Health Justice Act would address this by:

Creating a grant program to pay for hiring, training, salary, benefits and additional expenses for mental health provider first responder units.

- These mental health providers would act as a mental health emergency response team, deployed when 911 is called because someone is in a mental health crisis or related situation. Mental health providers would be the first on the scene to help the individual and could help them access appropriate community resources.

Providing expert advice through technical assistance from the Disability Rights Section of the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice (DOJ) and from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

- States and localities would be able to apply for technical assistance from DOJ and SAMHSA if they choose to use their own funding for the program costs from another portion of the law enforcement budget if they choose to move funding around to create a program that falls under these guidelines.

**Creating mental health first responder units will help reduce violence against individuals with mental illnesses and intellectual and developmental disabilities, while also improving the safety of our communities. Mental illness is not a crime, and it's time we stop treating it as one.**

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**Supporting Organizations:** Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Center for American Progress, Center for Law and Social Policy, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, The Arc of the United States, National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors, National Health Care for the Homeless Council, National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Clinical Social Work Association, National Association for Rural Mental Health, American Association on Health and Disability, Lakeshore Foundation, American Group Psychotherapy Association, National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health, Kennedy Forum, Postpartum International, Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness, American Association of Suicidology, American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work, Disability Concerns - Christian Reformed Church in North America, Disability Concerns - Reformed Church in America, Justice in Aging, Trevor Project, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Autistic Self Advocacy Network, American Society of Addiction Medicine, 2020 Mom, Union for Reform Judaism