

Statement for Support for Portland Street Response

May 6, 2021

Mental Health Alliance Work Group

Members of City Council,

We write today as members of the Mental Health Alliance Work Group, a work group of community members which has been deeply involved in police accountability and reform for several years. The Mental Health Alliance (MHA) is an amicus to *US DOJ v. City of Portland*. In its capacity as amicus, MHA provides testimony to the court on the progress of the settlement, of which police interactions with people with mental illnesses is a central concern. Our work group is composed of attorneys, clinicians, and people with lived experience of mental illness, addiction, and alcoholism.

We want to address our significant concerns about the extremely limited expansion of the Portland Street Response (PSR). Recently, Portland Police killed Robert Delgado, a homeless man experiencing a mental health crisis, in broad daylight in a public park. Robert Delgado's tragic death reaffirmed the need for Portland to expand the availability of crisis support services so that no more families would have to experience the grief of losing a family member in crisis to police violence. PSR is no panacea to police violence against people in mental health crises—it currently doesn't involve peer support and has limited ability to respond to issues other than welfare checks—but it provides a foundation for our city to build upon as we develop a robust crisis response system.

The proposed budget does not reflect the urgent need and public support for non-police crisis response. Instead, it maintains the status quo, insisting it is too soon to expand the Portland Street Response program and that we need more time to determine whether the program is working. For too many people in a mental health crisis, having the government's response be armed individuals poorly trained in crisis de-escalation is a formula for disaster. We know that meeting people with mental illness with support and resources doesn't just lead to better outcomes for them and for the community, it also saves money compared to just cycling those people through a criminal justice system entirely unequipped to serve them. We have decades of experience with programs like CAHOOTS showing us that there is a better way.

We urge you to fully fund a rapid citywide expansion of Portland Street Response, and in doing so tell the people in Portland living with mental illness that their city is willing to invest in services to keep them safe.

This statement was written by the [Mental Health Alliance Work](#) Group

Rochelle Silver PHD

Patrick Nolen

Meredith Mathis

Amanda J. Marshall JD

Rabbi Ariel Stone

Jan Friedman JD

Jason Renaud

Mark Schorr LPC, NPS, CADCI

Michael Hopcroft

Sandra Chisholm MPA

Mary-Margaret Wheeler-Weber

Maggie Powers

Mark Chasse JD

Liz Reetz JD

Javonnie Shearn

Tara Candela, JD, PMHNP-BC RN

KC Lewis JD

Julia Baker

Juan C. Chavez JD

Franz Bruggemeier JD

Organizational Members of the Mental Health Alliance

[Oregon Justice Resource Center](#)

[Disability Rights Oregon](#)

[Mental Health Association of Portland](#)

The Portland Interfaith Clergy Resistance