

August 3, 2022

Office of Senator John Cornyn
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20010

Office of Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
530 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20010

Dear Senators Cornyn and Whitehouse,

Our faith-based organizations write to urge for broad co-sponsorship among your colleagues and the swift passage of the Law Enforcement De-escalation Training Act of 2022 (S.4003) as it would help police officers better serve vulnerable populations and keep our communities safe. Furthermore, this bill would promote a more restorative justice system that respects the God-given dignity of each person and promote safe communities for both law enforcement officers and residents. The bill would also provide law enforcement officers with the skills and tools needed to respond appropriately to the needs of the communities they protect and serve.

Police officers respond every day to calls for service for men and women grappling with grave mental and behavioral health challenges.¹ However, they are not consistently trained to address these situations effectively.² Inadequate training can undermine law enforcement officers' wellbeing and job satisfaction, and increase incidents of excessive use of force that erodes public trust. Policymakers must better equip law enforcement officers with evidence-based training for interactions with people in crisis that fosters community partnership, promotes understanding of mental illness, and prioritizes the lowest level of force necessary to keep communities safe.³

Several key provisions position the Law Enforcement De-escalation Training Act (S.4003) to be a catalyst for modernizing American policing. The legislation would create a new federal funding stream to provide training for law enforcement agencies on de-escalation techniques, on participation in crisis intervention teams, on making referrals to community-based service providers, on safely responding to individuals in a behavioral or mental health crisis, and on alternatives to use of force. Furthermore, the bill would advance transparency and accountability to best practices through strong reporting and evaluation requirements from the Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, and Government Accountability Office. To foster public trust, the Department of Justice will develop training curriculum in collaboration with mental health providers, law enforcement agencies, civil rights organizations, and other stakeholders. The legislation would provide funding for continuing education for law enforcement officers to further refine their knowledge and tactical skills beyond initial training requirements.

We support the passage of the Law Enforcement De-escalation Training Act of 2022 as it would provide law enforcement officers the training needed to carefully respond to the needs of the community in a way that would promote human dignity and strengthen public trust.

Sincerely,

Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Prison Ministry Coalition
Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Center for Public Justice
Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology
National Association of Evangelicals
National Latino Evangelical Coalition
National Hispanic Christian Leadership Coalition
Prison Fellowship

¹ James Livingston, *Contact Between Police & People with Mental Disorders: A Review of Rates*, Journal of the American Psychiatric Association (2016), <http://www.gocit.org/uploads/3/0/5/5/30557023/appi.ps.201500312.pdf>.

² Task Force on Policing, *Effectiveness of Police Training*, Council on Criminal Justice (March 2021), <https://counciloncj.foleon.com/policing/assessing-the-evidence/iv-effectiveness-of-police-training/>.

³ PF, *Policing*, Prison Fellowship (2022), https://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/advocacy/policing/#_edn14.