

LAW, JUSTICE, AND ETHICS

Resolution LJE-21-33

A RESOLUTION ON EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislatures (NBCSL) has long been committed to improving mental health programs and services;

WHEREAS, people with an untreated mental illness are 16 times more likely to be killed during an encounter with the police, according to the Treatment Advocacy Center; and

WHEREAS, according to the Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, Black adults in are more likely than white adults to report symptoms of emotional distress;

WHEREAS, although adults with untreated severe mental illness represent fewer than 1 in 50 U.S. adults, they account for at least 1 in 4 of fatal police shooting;

WHEREAS, Black and Latino men are two and half times more likely to die in a police encounter than white men;

WHEREAS, our nation has relied on jails and prisons as a substitute for mental health treatment;

WHEREAS, police officers are not adequately equipped to handle the complexities of mental illness;

WHEREAS, mental illness is not a crime and therefore people should not be criminalized for having a mental health crisis; and

WHEREAS, the nation needs an alternative to law enforcement to address mental health crisis.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) encourages state policymakers and their membership to advocate for an Emergency Mental Health Response Unit to be available to respond to mental health emergencies in our communities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL encourages state legislators to explore legislation to establish an Emergency Mental Health Response Unit, in their respective states;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL supports increased mental health training for law enforcement to identify mental health emergencies, as well as training for Emergency Medical Technicians to identify and aid in mental health emergency;

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BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

SPONSOR(S): Senator Kevin Parker (NY)

Committee of Jurisdiction: Law, Justice, and Ethics Policy Committee

Certified by Committee Chair: Representative Reginald Meeks (KY)

Ratified in Plenary Session: Ratification Date is December 3, 2020

Ratification is certified by: Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC), President