

From: [REDACTED]  
To: [CMO BoardFeedback](#)  
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Hello -

My name is Nisha Masharani and I am a lifelong resident of San Mateo County, currently in Redwood City. I'm writing to you about agenda item 5A, the MOU between BHRS and four San Mateo County cities to create a pilot to send mental health professionals along with police officers to respond to mental health crisis 911 calls. While I'm excited about this program overall, I'm disappointed that this program involves sending an armed police officer with the mental health professional. Armed police officers have been responsible for killing at least three mentally ill people in San Mateo County in the past few years: Chinedu Okobi, Kyle Hart, and Ramzi Saad. There are hundreds of known examples of these atrocities nationwide -- and probably thousands more that aren't known or widely reported.

In Redwood City, our council conducted listening sessions over the summer to hear how residents felt about the police and racial inequity in Redwood City. Out of all of the feedback the city received from residents, the most prevalent piece of feedback was a repeated request to "Descope/Defund Police", mentioned 62 times in listening sessions. In a VOCA poll of 913 Redwood City residents, 48% called for a reduction to police department funding & scope, while only 13% called for an increase. However, this pilot program does not descope the police at all -- the scope of the police stays exactly the same, and maybe actually increases slightly, as they now have to learn to partner with mental health professionals.

Cities and counties across the US have solved this problem by having trained mental health professionals respond to crisis calls when appropriate -- without the need for an armed officer who can lead to escalation. For example, in [Eugene, OR, counselors take "low-risk" calls ranging from mental health concerns to domestic violence](#) (CAHOOTS). Of the 25,000 calls the team went on in the last year, they had to call for police backup in only 150 cases. They're also much cheaper than police officers -- for example, they take 20% of Eugene's 911 calls and cost the city \$2M per year, which is ~4% of the RCPD 2020-21 budget. Eugene isn't alone in this program -- other cities like Olympia, WA, Denver, CO, and, in our own backyard, cities like San Francisco, Berkeley, and San Leandro have all invested in programs like these. San Mateo county is an anomaly in choosing to send armed police officers with mental health professionals -- not the norm.

In light of recent allegations from the [Washington Post](#) among other outlets, members of the law enforcement community across this country are "facing termination, suspension or other discipline for their proximity to or alleged involvement" in the rally and insurrection in Washington. It's deeply concerning to me that San Mateo County is taking zero steps to reduce the punitive power of the police over its citizens, despite these allegations that police across the US are closely connected to white-supremacist insurrectionists. We have an opportunity to save the lives of San Mateo County residents, reduce the oppression of BIPOC in our community, and save money -- but instead, we're choosing a pilot that does none of those things.

I urge the Board of Supervisors to reconsider and develop a plan that involves training mental health professionals to deal with crisis calls independently.

Thank you for your time,

Nisha Masharani  
Redwood City