

HCR 5 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Rules

Prepared By: Melissa Leoni, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 4/20

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Declares intent to develop a statewide strategy that alleviates the burden of law enforcement to respond to complex mental and behavioral health crises, and resolves that the Legislative Assembly shall examine the "Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets" (CAHOOTS) model and other community-based mobile crisis intervention services to provide a framework for a statewide approach to behavioral health mobile crisis response teams.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Police officers are called upon to respond to a broad range of issues that are often outside of their primary responsibilities and training. Police officers are not trained to handle or de-escalate behavioral health calls involving the houseless community.

Oregon has a higher prevalence of mental illness than any other state, and Oregon ranks last among states in access to care for persons with mental illness, an issue that acutely impacts rural communities. Twenty-five service areas in the state have reported that they have no mental health providers in their area.

A recent study found that 25 to 50 percent of fatal officer-involved shootings involved a person with severe mental illness. Americans with untreated mental illness are 16 times more likely than other persons to be shot and killed by police officers. Oregon incarcerates more individuals with severe mental illness than it hospitalizes.

The Portland Police Bureau receives a 9-1-1 call every 15 minutes reporting that a person, often a member of the houseless community, has "frightened or inconvenienced" the caller. Such calls account for half of all calls for police assistance, and less than a quarter of the calls report a crime. Houseless persons are less inclined than other persons to contact the police when they are victims of a crime. Police officers describe unclear expectations in interactions with houseless persons, and officers are often uncertain whether they should connect houseless persons to services or enforce anti-camping and related laws, which often leads to the excessive use of force.

Oregon must focus on a comprehensive analysis of where law enforcement ends and health care begins. A proven model that can inform a new statewide approach is CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets), a community policing initiative developed in 1989 in Eugene, Oregon. The CAHOOTS model is an innovative and successful community-based public safety system to provide mental health first response for crises involving mental illness, houselessness, and addiction.

House Concurrent Resolution 5 declares the intent of the Legislative Assembly to develop a statewide strategy that alleviates the burden of law enforcement to respond to complex mental and behavioral health crises.