



Mr. Chairman – Our county is in the midst of a dialogue aimed at increasing both the effectiveness, as well as transparency of law enforcement activities within our community.

The challenges before us are too complex, and far too pervasive for any single solution. They must be met individually and with dedicated fixes—whether they be failures of process or breakdowns of culture.

To address the cultural shortcomings that have brought us to this juncture will require a sustained and long-term commitment.

To rectify failures of process, we can act much more quickly.

We often cite the fact that we are the safest jurisdiction of our size in the nation. That mantle is one that our law enforcement professionals should be exceptionally proud of. However, I believe that in addition to the safest, we must also endeavor to be the smartest.

It's become clear to us that we are asking our law enforcement professionals to do far too much. Today, in Fairfax County, if you call 911 your call will almost certainly be dispatched to a Fairfax County Police (FCPD) officer. Setting aside instances of ambulance and fire dispatches, that means that we are regularly deploying FCPD officers to respond to calls that are principally mental and behavioral health crises, as opposed to criminal activity.

Based on data available from other jurisdictions that have studied this issue, these types of calls account for approximately 20% of all calls made to 911.

I recognize that the dedicated officers of the FCPD overwhelmingly endeavor to deescalate potentially dangerous situations where mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse are a factor. Through Diversion First programs, the deployment of mobile crisis units, and the application of the department's crisis intervention training (CIT), I am confident that our

officers prevent unnecessary harm and violence in our community every single day.

However, only 40% of our officers are currently trained in CIT techniques. Never has this disparity been more clear to me personally than in the body camera footage of the recent incident in Gum Springs, where one officer clearly and responsibly worked to deescalate and render assistance to a resident in mental distress, while another officer chose to escalate the situation to the point of violence—in my view without having made a meaningful effort to peacefully resolve the situation.

This is a disconnect that is not unique to Fairfax County, and one that other jurisdictions have succeeded in overcoming. For example, in Eugene, Oregon the city has implemented what is known as the CAHOOTS model, a strategic triage initiative that dispatches unarmed medics and mental health workers to 911 calls that do not contain elements of extreme violence or criminal activity. These crisis intervention workers are able to alert law enforcement in instances where they require additional support, however out of roughly 24,000 calls dispatched in 2019 only approximately 150 required additional intervention from law enforcement—a success rate of over 99%.

Additionally, this strategic deployment strategy is estimated to save the city of Eugene roughly \$15 million annually due to its significant positive downstream effects.

Jurisdictions in California, Arizona and New Jersey have instituted similar models to great effect, and I believe that the time has come for Fairfax County to evaluate the feasibility of following their example.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, Supervisor Alcorn and I make the following motions:

- That the Board direct the County Executive to assign the appropriate staff, including but not limited to the Deputy County Executive for Public Safety and the Deputy County Executive for Human Services to review our 911 dispatch and response system to enhance our Diversion First strategies by implementing systems for the deployment of trained unarmed medical, human services, and mental health professionals in instances where mental and behavioral health are the principal reason for the call.

Lee District

Supervisor Rodney Lusk

Hunter Mill District

Supervisor Walter Alcorn

- That specific consideration should be given to programs that have been successfully implemented in other jurisdictions, such as the CAHOOTS model, which has been in place for over 30 years.
- That the results of that study be returned to the Public Safety Committee with estimates as they relate to potential initial costs, long-term budget savings, the feasibility of a pilot program, and non-budgetary outcomes such as increased quality of service and decreased strain on our law enforcement professionals.
- And that a status update on this effort be shared with the Board no later than October 1st, 2020.
- Thank you Mr. Chairman.