

Thank you Chairwoman Kahle and members of the committee for the opportunity to speak about SB 637-638.

It's clear that we have to change the way we respond to behavioral health crises. When we call for help when someone is having a mental health emergency, we should ideally have someone respond who is best trained to give the intervention that is needed and get the individual the services that they need.

But instead our current system usually will trigger law enforcement to come – but without a guarantee that the officer who arrives has the knowledge or training regarding behavioral health and interventions and without knowing whether a mental health professional might be coming with that officer or officers.

Our law enforcement officers are valuable and busy and their time is best spent preventing and solving crimes, and addressing the public safety concerns for which they are uniquely trained. We should be deploying more mental health professionals to help our officers respond to mental health emergencies.

Our bills create grant fund programs to help local jurisdictions across our state build new or expanded community crisis response and behavioral health diversion programs. We know that there are great models all around the country and right here in Michigan whose success we can build on.

In these models, mental health professionals respond to crises in partnership with law enforcement and, when it's safe, direct someone to services without an arrest. This is better for our public safety, a good use of our taxpayer dollars, and will keep people with mental illness out of jail when they don't need to be there – they instead need help.

The Joint Task Force on Jail and Pre-Trial incarceration discovered that one quarter of people in Michigan's jails have serious mental illness. Is this really where they should be? In addition, we have seen tragic incidents where law enforcement response has led to injury or death.

My bill, SB 637, creates the community crisis response grant program, through which DHHS will distribute grants to local governments for these mobile crisis intervention services.

The bill also outlines clear evaluation metrics that an independent organization will use to evaluate the programs.

The department will also develop a model memorandum of understanding between community agencies and law enforcement, provide technical assistance, facilitate sharing of best practices, and assist with cross-training resources between law enforcement and mental health professionals.

Thanks so much and I'll turn it over to Senator Outman, who I'm so grateful to work with on this effort.