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To: [DOJ: Commission on Law Enforcement Accountability](#)
Subject: Written Testimony - Mental Health & Addiction
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To the Commission on Accountability, Community, and Transparency,

I would ultimately like New Hampshire to make mental health crises be something responded to by communities and mental health organizations instead of the police.

According to Treatment Advocacy Center, people with untreated mental illness are 16 times more likely to be shot by police. It is known that these risks increase if these mentally ill people are also people of color. The police - people with guns, who have the ability to frighten those experiencing mental health issues - are not the people to respond to mental health crises, and there are people much better equipped. Friends and family can often help suicidal people a lot by reminding them how much they care. But when friends and family aren't available or are unable to help, who can show up instead? Peer support workers, crisis workers, even social workers or other trained mental health professionals. If the mental health issue involves sexual assault, domestic violence, or drug and alcohol abuse, a trauma informed mental health worker who can get them the support and resources they need or an addiction counselor who can talk to them about addiction and help them find resources in their area. Mental health issues are not issues for law enforcement. It just doesn't make sense to have the police called if you're suicidal, having a mental breakdown, or panic attack. Especially not when a mentally ill person having the police called on them has had deadly consequences for that person. Police are just not trained for this the way mental health workers are and have the potential to escalate a situation they should not be responding to to begin with.

I also am not sure if this is the right place, but I wish the police and government and local mental health organizations would work together to find more alternatives to arrest and incarceration for drug addicts. NH is one of the states hit hardest by the Opioid crisis, and too many of the drug addicts here end up in our jails, which does not help the crisis at all. People are dying and suffering from addiction every year without help and it should not be that way. Putting them in jail often worsens the trauma that made them use in the first place, adds to their shame and the stigma, and even worse - when they're released, according to accounts I've read from addicts incarcerated in NH, once they leave jail they often have more connections for drugs and little access to treatment due to lack of insurance, lack of transportation, lack of safe housing and secure employment. This just contributes to their cycle of using and incarceration. They deserve a better chance to break the cycle. We should also add safe consumption sites and more needle exchanges and

other harm reduction initiatives to decrease overdoses and other health concerns associated with using.

Thank you for reading.