



**COMPASSIONATE
ALTERNATIVE
RESPONSE
TEAM**

September 3, 2021

Mayor London Breed
City Hall, Room 200, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place,
San Francisco, CA, 94102

RE: Please place Compassionate Alternative Response Team (CART) in the Department of Public Health, Behavioral Health division.

Dear Mayor Breed,

Thank you for your support of the Compassionate Alternative Response Team (CART) in the budget. We are writing to strongly and passionately request that CART be placed in the Department of Public Health, Behavioral Health Services (DPH BHS).

The reasons for this placement are many.

We believe if the CART vision is implemented, San Francisco can achieve lasting systemic change for our unhoused and housed communities. The model was developed in an open consensus working group that included over 50 academics, city representatives, community based organizations that serve homeless people and homeless and formerly homeless people themselves.

After extensive research of 30 similar models from around the globe, and gathering extensive input from unhoused residents, CART proposes a model of well paid and extensively trained peer outreach workers who respond to “C” priority homeless related 911 calls, instead of police.

The team will develop trust, have deep knowledge of the homeless system, and transport individuals to care. As you know, a police response to homelessness service calls wastes resources, fails to end homelessness and often just moves unhoused people from block to block. It also results in citations and criminalization. In fact, over a third of our jail population is unhoused.

When the Board of Supervisors funded CART, they put it on unappropriated reserves and did not assign it to a particular department. We believe that for CART to be successful, it must be placed in the DPH BHS. This is crucial for the following reasons:

1. CART's vision fits within a public health perspective, preventing more serious behavioral health issues by connecting individuals with service before they are in crisis.
2. DPH BHS has extensive and deep experience in street level responses that successfully address their behavioral health issues, and moving people out of homelessness, whereas DEM does not.
3. DPH BHS already contracts with community based organizations. This model is deliberately *community based and government funded*. This will ensure cultural competency, building the capacity of black and brown led organizations who already have deep trust and relationships within the community, and who can easily hire people with life experiences of those on the streets.
4. DPH BHS recently started other teams, which need to collaborate closely with CART, even though they are responding to distinctly different calls.
5. DPH BHS has the capacity for a city-wide program addressing over 65,000 anticipated calls for service.
6. DPH BHS already successfully garners state and federal grants, which are essential to CART. CART was funded at \$3 million, but the total annual cost for 2022 is \$6.825 million. CART could be fully implemented with existing funding if it starts February 1st and the full funding is applied the following year, using state, local and federal resources.

Thank you for your consideration. We respectfully ask for a reply to this letter by next Friday, September 10th.

Sincerely,

CART Coalition Communications Committee

CC: Sean Elsbernd, Mayor's Chief of Staff
Director Hillary Kunnin, Department of Behavioral Health
Director Mary Ellen Carroll, Department of Emergency Management
Amy Sawyer, Mayor's Homeless Liaison

**CART refers to the end product of a collective crafting of a model, and not a particular organization.*