

**From:** Hopkins, Emily <Emily.Hopkins@mail.house.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 17, 2023 4:09 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Mental Health Justice Act Introduced

Good afternoon, Clarke,

I hope this email finds you well!

Thank you for endorsing Representative Porter's Mental Health Justice Act of 2023! This legislation is one of the Congresswoman's top priorities and I am deeply appreciative that American Association on Health and Disability supports this bill. This is the first time ever that the bill has been introduced on a bipartisan basis!

As the bill was introduced this morning, it will take a few days for the bill to appear on Congress.gov. I am happy to follow up with the bill number next week, if that is of interest. Senator Warren is introducing companion legislation in the Senate following the Thanksgiving recess.

I have included our press release below as well as linked our [tweet](#) about this legislation! Thank you again for your support and partnership on this legislation. Please let me know if you have any questions!

Thank you kindly,  
Emily

## *News from* **Congresswoman Katie Porter**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 16, 2023



Contact: [Peter Opitz \(Porter\)](#) – [\(202\) 604-7004](tel:(202)604-7004)

# **Rep. Porter Reintroduces Bipartisan Mental Health Justice Act**

*Legislation would fund grants for mental health emergency responders*

WASHINGTON—Reps. Katie Porter (D-CA), Tony Cárdenas (D-CA), Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), and Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA) today announced the reintroduction of the *Mental Health Justice Act of 2023* with 48 of their colleagues. The *Mental Health Justice Act* would help states, tribes, and localities establish mental health responder units to support individuals in crisis. Sen. Warren plans to introduce companion legislation in the Senate.

According to data from The Washington Post, 1 in 5 fatal police shootings since 2015 ended the life of a person suffering from mental illness. The *Mental Health Justice Act* aims to reduce the killing and incarceration of people with mental illnesses, substance use disorders, and intellectual or developmental disabilities, and instead connect them with the health care and services they need. A version of this bipartisan bill passed the House in 2022 with support from Democrats and Republicans.

“Mental illness is not a crime, and it’s time we stop treating it as one,” **said Rep. Porter**. “Having the right type of responders for mental health emergencies will make our communities safer, reduce the strain on our criminal justice system, and stop distracting law enforcement from what Americans need them to do—fight crime. I’m proud to work with colleagues from across the aisle to reintroduce the *Mental Health Justice Act* and deliver care to people in crisis.”

“I’m glad to reintroduce the Mental Health Justice Act to make it easier for trained mental health professionals to respond to a mental health or substance use crisis,” **said Senator Warren**. “Safety should mean taking care of people in our communities who face mental health issues, not criminalizing them or leaving them to a police system that is not equipped to provide the care they need.”

“Folks experiencing a mental health crisis deserve resources and care—not to be criminalized by police and put in harm’s way,” **said Rep. Pressley**. “Our bill promotes a public health approach to public safety by sending culturally congruent and trained mental health professionals to respond to community members in moments of crisis, rather than deploying police officers, which puts the lives of those in crisis at risk. I’m grateful to Reps. Porter, Scanlon, Cardenas, and our colleagues for their ongoing partnership.”

“The American people and law enforcement agree — individuals experiencing a mental health crisis need to be connected with trained mental health professionals, not thrown in jail,” **said Rep. Scanlon**. “But all too often, we see the tragic consequences of interactions between people in crisis and police officers who lack the necessary training to care for them. I’m proud to join Rep. Porter on this common-sense legislation to keep our communities safe by providing the resources needed to care for our most vulnerable.”

“Too often, mental health emergencies are met with a law enforcement response. The result is trauma, unnecessary uses of force, and the criminalization of people with mental health disabilities, especially when they are Black,” **said Megan Schuller, Legal Director of the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law**. “Physical health emergencies receive a healthcare response; the same should be true for mental health emergencies. The Mental Health Justice Act is an important step toward addressing this injustice, by investing in alternatives to a police response for mental health calls and supporting evidence-based practices to make communities safer for all.”

The *Mental Health Justice Act* would:

- Create a grant program that allows states, tribes, and localities to hire, train, and dispatch mental health professionals to respond to mental health emergencies when 911, 988, or another emergency hotline is called;
- Empower the Civil Rights Division at DOJ and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at HHS to provide technical assistance to grant recipients;
- Require a study on the effectiveness of the grant program; and
- Establish best practices for mental health professionals responding to mental health emergencies.

The *Mental Health Justice Act* is cosponsored by 48 Representatives, including: Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Brendan F. Boyle (D-PA), Yadira Caraveo (D-CO), Andre Carson (D-IN), Troy Carter, Sr. (D-LA), Sean Casten (D-IL), Judy Chu (D-CA), Steve Cohen (D-TN), Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ), Gerry Connolly (D-VA), Lloyd Doggett (D-TX), Dwight Evans (D-PA), Bill Foster (D-IL), Jesús “Chuy” Garcia (D-IL), Robert Garcia (D-CA), Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ), Jonathan L. Jackson (D-IL), Sara Jacobs (D-

CA), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), Hank Johnson (D-GA), Robin Kelly (D-IL), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Mike Levin (D-CA), Betty McCollum (D-MN), Kweisi Mfume (D-MD), Grace Meng (D-NY), Gwen Moore (D-WI), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ), Dean Phillips (D-MN), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Mark Pocan (D-WI), Delia C. Ramirez (D-IL), Deborah Ross (D-NC), Andrea Salinas (D-OR), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), Melanie Stansbury (D-NM), Mark Takano (D-CA), Dina Titus (D-NV), Ritchie Torres (D-NY), David Trone (D-MD), Susan Wild (D-PA), and Nikema Williams (D-GA).

Over 40 organizations have endorsed Rep. Porter's *Mental Health Justice Act*, including: Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Color of Change, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc., Access Ready Inc. Alternative Mobile Services Association, American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Association of Suicidology, American Association on Health and Disability, American Civil Liberties Union, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American Psychological Association, American Society of Addiction Medicine, Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness, Association of University Centers on Disabilities, Autistic Self Advocacy Network, Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network, Autism Society of America, Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, Center for American Progress, Center for Policing Equity, Clinical Social Work Association, CommunicationsFIRST, Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, Justice in Aging, Kennedy Forum, Lakeshore Foundation, National Action Network, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors, National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, National Association of Social Workers, National Association for Rural Mental Health, National Emergency Number Association, National Health Care for the Homeless Council, Orange County Sheriff's Office, Partnership to End Addiction, Postpartum Support International, Public Citizen, Trevor Project, and the Union for Reform Judaism.

In Congress, Rep. Porter has made improving mental health care a top priority. Her bipartisan legislation to hold insurance companies accountable for treating mental health care the same as other types of care was signed into law in 2020. Rep. Porter also wrote legislation that was signed into law last year to improve mental health coverage for public servants, including public school teachers, firefighters, and police. She has introduced legislation aimed at improving students and teachers' mental health.

Read the full bill text [HERE](#).

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