



CONSENT CALENDAR  
December 14, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Rigel Robinson (Author) and Councilmember Hahn (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Support for H.R. 4194: The People's Response Act

### RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution supporting H.R. 4194, the People's Response Act, which would create a Division of Community Safety and provide grants to local governments, state governments, and community-based organizations to support non-carceral approaches to public safety. Furthermore, send a letter of support to Representative Cori Bush, Representative Barbara Lee, Senator Alex Padilla, and Senator Dianne Feinstein.

### BACKGROUND

H.R. 4194, the People's Response Act, would create a Division of Community Safety within the Department of Health and Human Services that funds and coordinates research, provides grants for developing and implementing approaches to community safety, and facilitates inter-agency collaboration on the federal level.

This bill intends to "transform public safety into a system of care rather than criminalization," doing so by simultaneously mobilizing federal resources and expanding resources available to local and state governments and community-based organizations interested in advancing alternative models of public safety. Grant funding can be used for a wide range of programs, including unarmed first responder agencies, violence prevention programs, infrastructure investments, health services, and other programs that address the root causes of poverty, mental illness, homelessness, and substance use. Specifically, the People's Response Act would provide:

- \$7.5 billion in grant funding to state and local governments to fully fund public safety and improve crisis response.
- \$2.5 billion to the First Responder Hiring Grant, enabling the hiring of social workers and peer support specialists.

Additionally, the People's Response Act lays out mechanisms for supporting the most impacted communities, such as giving funding priority to cities with disproportionate rates of poverty and incarceration; organizations that employ those directly impacted by the immigration and criminal justice systems; and organizations that have proven ties to the communities they serve.

This bill is of critical importance to the City of Berkeley and other municipalities dedicated to exploring alternatives to policing. As the City's Reimagining Public Safety Taskforce and Specialized Care Unit Taskforce work wraps up over the next year, we will be looking at both the City's available funds and additional grant programs to secure funding for implementation. Federal resources are crucial for continuing this work in cities across the country, as well as supporting community-based organizations who are key partners in supporting and implementing these alternative approaches.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No impact.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Rigel Robinson, (510) 981-7170  
Cyn Gómez, Intern

Attachments:

- 1: Letter of support
- 2: Resolution
- 2: Bill text <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4194/text?r=8&s=1>

December 14, 2021

The Honorable Cori Bush  
563 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**RE: City of Berkeley's Support for The People's Response Act**

Dear Representative Cori Bush,

The Berkeley City Council would like to convey our full support for H.R. 4194, The People's Response Act — an important bill that would improve community safety, reduce reliance on the criminal justice system, and support the parallel efforts of local governments, state governments, and grassroots organizers.

The City of Berkeley, like many other municipalities across the country, is taking the necessary steps to reimagine public safety. We are heartened to see decisive action being pursued on the federal level that would not only funnel federal resources into a Division of Community Safety, but additionally provide much-needed funding to cities and community-based organizations to implement non-carceral programs on the local level. The resources provided by this bill would help develop and fund concrete implementation plans in Berkeley and across the country for critical programs such as mental health response, violence intervention and prevention, and unarmed first responders.

The People's Response Act responds to the calls for change in our country on a scale that is appropriate and needed. This progressive bill is one part of the solution to our broken, punitive system of public safety. We stand firmly in support of H.R. 4194 and thank you for this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

The Berkeley City Council

CC: Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Senator Alex Padilla  
Representative Barbara Lee

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 4194, THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSE ACT

WHEREAS, The People's Response Act aims to improve crisis response and public safety by encouraging and funding alternative models that address the root causes of crime, rather than relying on punitive enforcement; and

WHEREAS, the status quo has resulted in a system in which Black people make up 6% of the State of California's residents but 28% of the State's prison population, while Latinx people make up 38% of the State's residents but 41% of the prison population; and

WHEREAS, this bill responds to the reckoning that this country is facing for its inhumane immigration and carceral systems, police violence and bias, and lack of structural community supports, all of which disproportionately impact Black and brown communities; and

WHEREAS, The People's Response Act will establish a Division of Community Safety and award grants to local governments, state governments, and community-based organizations in order to develop and implement qualified approaches to community safety; and

WHEREAS, as a city dedicated to transforming its approach to public safety, the City of Berkeley supports much-needed increases to federal support that would empower cities to improve mental health and homelessness response, create supportive programs designed to lift people up from poverty, and implement alternatives to policing.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Berkeley supports H.R. 4194, The People's Response Act.