

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-2302  
April 27, 2023

United States Department of Justice  
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services  
ATTN: Director Hugh T. Clements, Jr.  
145 N Street NE  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Director Clements Jr.,

I am writing in strong support of the Burnsville Police Department's application for the COPS Hiring Program grant. The Burnsville Police Department is applying for \$375,000 for three FTE police officer positions under this opportunity. Two officers will be assigned to the Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) to enhance efforts to support community members in crisis. One officer will be assigned to patrol to enhance community policing efforts.

The Behavioral Health Unit currently has two FTE officers, one part-time data specialist and one part-time embedded social worker. In 2022, this team made 1,513 contacts in the community and provided training to over six agencies in Minnesota. For 2023, the BHU strives to continue to provide resources and training across the State of Minnesota. They have set the goal of partnering with other law enforcement agencies and social workers to provide information on impactful and intentional mental health responses. In order to continue to grow and accomplish these goals, the BHU has expressed a need for more staff support.

Overall, the Burnsville Police Department is experiencing a shortage of sworn officers and other employees. In addition to this shortage, the number of calls has massively increased for the department. Most notably, mental health and crisis calls for service in Burnsville have more than doubled over the past ten years. These calls are complex and often consume extensive police resources. The Behavioral Health Unit responds to these calls in partnership with Dakota County Social Services to support community members and improve interactions with persons in crisis and their families. The BHU has served as a model for other agencies and has provided presentations and training across Minnesota. This much needed investment will permit the unit to continue and expand upon their work.

Through the COPS Hiring Program, the Burnsville Police Department would be able to hire for three critical officer positions. Two officers would be assigned to the Behavioral Health Unit to enhance mental health response and one officer would be assigned to patrol to support the department's community policing efforts. This opportunity would allow the department to address critical capacity issues while providing much needed support for behavioral and mental health calls. I fully support the Burnsville Police Department's application for the COPS Hiring Program and request that you give this application all due consideration.

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Sincerely,



Angie Craig  
Member of Congress