

Date of Hearing: April 21, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
Lorena Gonzalez, Chair  
AB 118 (Kamlager) – As Introduced December 18, 2020

Policy Committee: Emergency Management

Vote: 6 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: >

**SUMMARY:**

This bill establishes the CRISES Act (or, the Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems Act) a three-year program to establish, implement and evaluate the CRISES Grant Pilot Program. The grant program is to provide funding to community organizations to create and strengthen community-based alternatives to law enforcement in response to crisis situations not related to a fire department or emergency medical service response.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Establishes the CRISES Act Grant Program of awards of at least \$250,000 to community organizations.
- 2) Establishes the CRISES Program Fund in the State Treasury to support the program and to be administered by the Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), monies which may be expended by Cal OES for the purposes of the program.
- 3) States the bill's provisions are to be implemented only if "appropriate funding" is available to OES.
- 4) Asserts the grant program is to create and strengthen community-based alternatives to law enforcement in response to crisis situations not related to a fire department or emergency medical service response in communities where there is a history and pattern of racial profiling, law enforcement violence, gaps in law enforcement service, or where vulnerable populations live, including people of color, elderly people, people with disabilities, people who are gender nonconforming, people who are likely to face disproportionate police contact, people who are formerly incarcerated, people with immigration status issues, people who are unhoused, people facing mental health crises, people involved in intimate partner violence, vulnerable youth, people likely to be engaged in community violence, people challenged by substance abuse, and people living in areas that are environmentally insecure with vulnerable populations and subject to natural or climate disasters or public health emergencies.
- 5) Establishes an 11-member CRISES Committee, to be appointed as follows and with consideration given to racial, gender and ethnic diversity, and representation of communities, as described in the bill:

- a) Five members by the Governor: an emergency medical system professional; a survivor of an emergency or crisis; a representative from a community organization providing direct services to vulnerable populations; a public health professional; and a representative of an advocacy or community organizing group serving vulnerable communities.
- b) Three members by the Senate Committee on Rules: a survivor of an emergency or crisis; a representative from a community organization; and a representative of an advocacy or community organizing group serving vulnerable communities.
- c) Three members by the Speaker of the Assembly: a survivor of an emergency or crisis; a representative from a community organization providing direct services to vulnerable populations; and a public health professional.

The bill directs the CRISES Committee to establish grant application criteria, review and decide upon grant proposals, ensure grants are adhering to standards, and monitor progress, conclusions, and challenges, as well as make recommendations to Cal OES on program development, implementation and oversight.

- 6) Directs Cal OES to establish rules and regulations for the program with the goal of making grants to community organizations, with grants to be issued no later than January 1, 2023, and to provide support to the CRISES Committee and technical assistance to applicants; develop and implement the grant program; solicit and review grant proposals; consult with local emergency-services personnel and community-based or grassroots organizations; maintain a program website; and report
- 7) Require Cal OES publish a public report, to be posted on Cal OES's website within six months of the program's end, on the programmatic and fiscal savings associated with the program, key conclusions, populations served and the benefits conferred or realized, and resulting policy recommendations to provide guidance to the Legislature and Governor in fully implementing and scaling a permanent program.

#### **FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) Cost pressure of an unknown, though significant, amount (General Fund and special funds) to provide funding for the CRISES Grant Program. The bill establishes minimum grant amounts of \$250,000. If OES makes 12 grants of \$250,000 each during the three years of program operation, grant totals would equal \$3,000,000.
- 2) Costs over the life of the program equivalent to approximately five percent to 10 percent of total grant amounts. If Cal OES makes 12 grants of \$250,000 each during the three years of program operation, Cal OES administrative costs would total between approximately \$150,000 and \$300,000. Cal OES's costs should be sufficient to cover establishment of the program, its implementation and analysis and reporting of the program after its close.

#### **COMMENTS:**

**Background and Purpose.** This bill follows a nearly identical bill by the same author from last year, AB 2054, which was vetoed by the Governor. In his veto message, the Governor asserted the "underlying goal of this legislation is important and implementing an effective solution will

help our communities.” Yet the veto message also expressed the Governor’s objection that “OES is not the appropriate location for the pilot program proposed in this legislation.”

The Governor’s objection notwithstanding, the California State Auditor released a report in December 2019 that reviewed the effectiveness of state and local emergency planning in addressing the needs of people with access and functional needs. The report concluded Cal OES was uniquely positioned to collect and provide information about lessons learned during natural disasters and recommended Cal OES review counties’ emergency plans and more actively involve organizations that represent vulnerable individuals in developing emergency plans.

Whether Cal OES is the appropriate agency to set up and administer the CRISES Act Grant Program is an open question. Supporters of the bill indicate they and the author are in discussion with the Governor’s office about identifying an administrative home for the grant program that satisfies the Governor’s objections. In any case, Cal OES administers several existing grant programs, so it seems Cal OES would possess the administrative wherewithal to establish and carry out the CRISES Act Grant Program, too.

In describing the need for the bill, the author contends:

The proposed pilot seeks to fill the void that exists in emergency response services for vulnerable populations so that young people of color, people with disabilities, people who are gender nonconforming, people who are likely to face disproportionate police contact, people who are formerly incarcerated, people with immigration status issues and people who are unhoused or homeless can have ready access to quality emergency services from trained professionals that ensure safety, are culturally appropriate and relationship-centered.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Jay Dickenson / APPR. / (916) 319-2081