

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 118 (Kamlager)

As Introduced December 18, 2020

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Establishes the Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems (C.R.I.S.E.S.) Act pilot grant program to expand the participation of community organizations in emergency response for vulnerable populations.

Major Provisions

- 1) Establishes, for three years, the C.R.I.S.E.S. Act grant pilot program, with the goal of expanding the participation of community organizations in emergency response for vulnerable populations.
- 2) Defines vulnerable populations as 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, people likely to be engaged in community violence, people challenged by substance abuse, and people living in areas that are environmentally insecure and subject to natural and climate disasters.
- 3) Requires the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to establish and administer the C.R.I.S.E.S. grant program with the goal of making grants to community organizations.
- 4) Specifies that a community organization receiving a grant under this program may use it for the following purposes: project planning; project implementation; staffing; facilities; operational costs; consulting services; training; and program evaluation.
- 5) Requires Cal OES to support the grant program and an 11-member C.R.I.S.E.S. Advisory Committee by providing technical, logistical, consultation and administrative functions to keep the public, the Legislature and the Governor apprised of the program's benefits and any policy recommendations.
- 6) Establishes an 11-member C.R.I.S.E.S. Advisory Committee comprised of the following members appointed by the Governor, Senate Rules Committee, or the Speaker of the Assembly, as specified: an emergency medical system professional; three survivors of emergency crises; two representatives of community organizations providing direct services to vulnerable populations; two public health professionals; two representatives of advocacy or community organizing groups serving vulnerable populations; and a representative of a community organization.
- 7) Requires the Advisory Committee to establish grant application criteria and meet at least quarterly.
- 8) Creates the Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems Act Fund in the State Treasury in support of the program and makes implementation contingent upon appropriate funding and appropriation by the Legislature.

COMMENTS

Whole Community Preparedness: FEMA, in both their 2018-2022 Strategic Plan and their emergency planning guidelines (Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101, Version 2.0) articulate the need to build a culture of preparedness by ensuring representation and services for under-represented diverse populations that may be more impacted by disasters including children, seniors, individuals with disabilities or access and functional needs, individuals with diverse culture and language use, individuals with lower economic capacity, and other underserved populations.

Community-based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP): CBDP refers to a specific form of local-level capacity building and represents increasingly important elements of vulnerability reduction and disaster management strategies. CBDP strategies leverage the knowledge and capabilities of local community resources. Successful implementation of CBDP requires a deep understanding of the communities involved. NGOs, such as American Red Cross or Salvation Army are well-equipped to implement CBDP strategies. Increasingly, the emergency management profession is realizing that governments alone cannot achieve significant, sustainable risk reduction and that greater investment in local-level and community-based approaches supported by NGOs or other community-based organizations should be made.

Governor's Veto of similar legislation, AB 2054 (Kamlager):

The Governor vetoed a similar legislation, AB 2054 (Kamlager), last year. The Governor's veto message including the following statements: "I am returning Assembly Bill 2054 without my signature. This bill would establish a grant pilot program administered by the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to stimulate and support community involvement in emergency response activities that do not require a law enforcement officer. The underlying goal of this legislation is important and implementing an effective solution will help our communities. Unfortunately, OES is not the appropriate location for the pilot program proposed in this legislation. My Administration will work with the Legislature and stakeholders during the next legislative session on an implementable solution. Should a grant program be the consensus, such a pilot should be established through the State Budget process."

There is ongoing conversations between the author and the Administration on how best to implement the policy goals of this legislation and whether or not Cal OES is the appropriate state entity to support this pilot program.

According to the Author

We must work to support the health and safety of our most vulnerable Californians. And we must rely on the knowledge, skills, credibility and trusted relationships that community organizations have and can deploy to keep people safe in these critical situations. Designed to de-escalate crises, reduce reactive violence, and to send vital services to people who have a tougher time accessing critically needed emergency services, this program seeks to expand the participation of community-based organizations in emergency response situations for vulnerable populations. 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.

Arguments in Support

The President of We the People – San Diego, Jean-Huy Tran, expressed their support explaining, "the proposed program seeks to fill the void currently existing 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 safely access quality emergency services that are culturally appropriate and from trained professionals with relationships and a track record of service in their communities. These vulnerable populations face significant barriers to engaging with law enforcement and other first responder personnel because of deep rooted fears and stigma generated by their status. In these circumstances, the presence of trained professionals from community-oriented organizations with a track-record of service can prove more beneficial than engagement from law enforcement officers."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, "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 million and 2) costs over the life of the program equivalent to approximately 5% to 10% 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."

VOTES

ASM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: 6-0-1

YES: Rodriguez, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Gallagher, Gray, Ward

ABS, ABST OR NV: Seyarto

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-1

YES: Lorena Gonzalez, Calderon, Carrillo, Chau, Megan Dahle, Davies, Fong, Gabriel, Eduardo Garcia, Levine, Quirk, Robert Rivas, Akilah Weber, Holden, Luz Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Bigelow

UPDATED

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