

March 4, 2025

### Ohio House of Representatives Public Safety Committee Testimony of Mayor David E. Weiss, City of Shaker Heights

Good morning, Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and distinguished members of the House Public Safety Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address you this morning. My name is David Weiss and I am the mayor of Shaker Heights, Ohio, a community of approximately 29,000 residents located in Cuyahoga County.

I am here to respectfully request your support for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in the upcoming biennium to fund the regional *First CALL* program, a model for crisis intervention first piloted in Shaker Heights.

Communities like ours across the country have been struggling to find ways to better respond to emergency calls involving persons with mental health issues.

In 2022, Shaker Heights piloted a mental health response program that involved embedding a fulltime, licensed social worker with our Police and Fire first responders.

The program was designed to have a licensed mental health professional respond to eligible crisis calls made to our dispatch center simultaneously with, but separately from, our first responders. Once on scene, the clinician would act as a resource to both the resident in crisis and to our first responders.

The clinician would also assist in de-escalation, connect the person in need to community resources, and follow up after the crisis.

In piloting the program in Shaker, we found great success in this model. Residents in crisis are getting appropriate care, and first responders are being trained in mental health response and supported by mental health professionals. In addition, we are using public safety resources more efficiently. Significantly, we are reducing risks during crisis responses, easing the strain on local emergency rooms, reducing repeat callers for emergency help, and enabling our Police and Fire first responders to focus on calls where their involvement is required.

Moreover, the model is scalable. The intent was always to eventually expand the program to neighboring cities.

Last year, we started to regionalize the program and we launched what is now named the "First CALL" program with four of our neighboring communities: Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid and University Heights. First CALL stands for "Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage" – as we link our neighbors in crisis to appropriate services and address any barriers to access.

Beginning mid-2024, we have three First CALL teams working in our five communities. We have partnered with Recovery Resources, an affiliate of the MetroHealth System, to hire additional licensed mental health professionals and trained peer support personnel.

Additionally, a mental health professional is now assigned to the Chagrin Valley Dispatch, the joint dispatch center serving all five participating communities.

During its first three months of our expanded operation, this regional First CALL program successfully addressed 170 active crisis calls, managed 408 additional referrals, and completed 758 follow-ups after a crisis intervention. Projections indicate that First CALL will serve more than 2,200 residents annually.

From the outset of our regional launch, we are partnering with Cleveland State University to help analyze and evaluate the program, its data, and results. For example, by completing follow-up care once a crisis has been resolved, we are seeing that First CALL reduces repeat emergency calls. In the third quarter of 2024, 74% of frequent callers did not make new emergency calls 30 days after intervention. We will continue to monitor our performance and track metrics as we grow.

First CALL has strong support from the mayors of all five participating communities as well as from Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne. We have secured significant grant funding and contributions from each participating city that has allowed our regional program to operate successfully for at least two years. We are now seeking state support to ensure First CALL continues successfully through a third year and beyond.

Through our work, we are demonstrating that effective crisis intervention can be successful, cost-effective, collaborative and replicable. We are hopeful that First CALL can serve as a model for more communities across the state.

In closing, I respectfully request your support for a \$400,000 budget allocation for the First CALL program to improve community health and public safety.

Thank you.



February 28, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

## **RE:** Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program.

Dear Chairmen and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

The mayors of Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights are united in our support for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in fiscal year 2027 to fund the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This critical initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and is currently expanding across our five cities, has proven to be an invaluable resource in our collective efforts to provide effective crisis intervention and support for our communities.

Through the First CALL program, licensed social workers accompany our first responders to emergencies. By prioritizing proactive de-escalation and connecting individuals in distress with essential services, we enhance outcomes and reduce risks during responses. This initiative improves community health and safety while addressing mental health issues and easing the strain on local emergency rooms and public safety resources.

During its first three months of operation, the regional First CALL program has successfully addressed 170 active crisis calls, managed 408 additional referrals, and completed 758 follow-ups after a crisis. With help from the state, projections indicate that First CALL will serve more than 2,200 residents annually, showcasing its potential for growth and impact.

Moreover, the First CALL program is a model for other communities, demonstrating that effective crisis intervention can be collaborative and replicable. By investing in this program, we are not just addressing current needs; we are paving the way for a system that can adapt and respond to future challenges related to mental health crises.

Please support the First CALL program to expand our commitment to the safety and health of our communities. With your support, we can realize the program's full potential and make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless individuals and families throughout Northeast Ohio. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Kahlil Seren Mayor, City of Cleveland Heights

40 SEVERANCE CIRCLE, CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OHIO 44118



Mayor Kim A. Thomas 26789 Highland Road Richmond Heights, Ohio 44143 P: (216) 486-2474

January 26, 2024

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budge request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL Program.

Dear Chairmen and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

The mayors of Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights are united in our support for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in fiscal year 2027 to fund the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This critical initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and is currently expanding across our five cities, has proven to be an invaluable resource in our collective efforts to provide effective crisis intervention and support for our communities.

Through the First CALL program, licensed social workers accompany our first responders to emergencies. By prioritizing proactive de-escalation and connecting individuals in distress with essential services, we enhance outcomes and reduce risks during responses. This initiative improves community health and safety while addressing mental health issues and easing the strain on local emergency rooms and public safety resources.

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Please support the First CALL program to expand our commitment to the safety and health of our communities. With your support, we can realize the program's full potential and make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless individuals and families throughout Northeast Ohio. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Kim A Thomas

Kim A. Thomas, Mayor City of Richmond Heights, Ohio



**COME TOGETHER & THRIVE** 

Georgine Welo Mayor

February 24, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215

The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

# RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program.

Dear Chairmen and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

The mayors of Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights are united in our support for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in fiscal year 2027 to fund the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This critical initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and is currently expanding across our five cities, has proven to be an invaluable resource in our collective efforts to provide effective crisis intervention and support for our communities.

Through the First CALL program, licensed social workers accompany our first responders to emergencies. By prioritizing proactive de-escalation and connecting individuals in distress with essential services, we enhance outcomes and reduce risks during responses. This initiative improves community health and safety while addressing mental health issues and easing the strain on local emergency rooms and public safety resources.

During its first three months of operation, the regional First CALL program has successfully addressed 170 active crisis calls, managed 408 additional referrals, and completed 758 follow-ups after a crisis. With help from the state, projections indicate that First CALL will serve more than 2,200 residents annually, showcasing its potential for growth and impact.

Moreover, the First CALL program is a model for other communities, demonstrating that effective crisis intervention can be collaborative and replicable. By investing in this program, we are not just addressing current needs; we are paving the way for a system that can adapt and respond to future challenges related to mental health crises.

Please support the First CALL program to expand our commitment to the safety and health of our communities. With your support, we can realize the program's full potential and make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless individuals and families throughout Northeast Ohio. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely, Georgine Welo Mayor



Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan mdb@universityheights.com 216.932.7800 x222

February 28, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13th Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program.

Dear Chair and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

On behalf of the City of University Heights, I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in fiscal year 2027 to fund the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This critical initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and has recently expanded to the cities of Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights, has proven to be an invaluable resource in our collective efforts to provide effective crisis intervention and support for our communities.

Through the First CALL program, licensed social workers accompany our first responders to emergencies. By prioritizing proactive de-escalation and connecting individuals in distress with essential services, we enhance outcomes and reduce risks during responses. This initiative improves community health and safety while addressing mental health issues and easing the strain on local emergency rooms and public safety resources.

During its first three months of operation, the regional First CALL program has successfully addressed 170 active crisis calls, managed 408 additional referrals, and completed 758 follow-ups after a crisis. With help from the state, projections indicate that First CALL will serve more than 2,200 residents annually, showcasing its potential for growth and impact.

Moreover, the First CALL program is a model for other communities, demonstrating that effective crisis intervention can be collaborative and

The Honorable Brian Stewart The Honorable Jerry Cirino February 28, 2025 Page 2

replicable. By investing in this program, we are not just addressing current needs; we are paving the way for a system that can adapt and respond to future challenges related to mental health crises.

Please support the First CALL program to expand our commitment to the safety and health of our communities. It has already made a big difference in University Heights. With your support, we can realize the program's full potential and make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless individuals and families throughout Northeast Ohio. Thank you for your consideration and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely yours Michael Dylan Brennan

Mayor



February 26, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

# RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program

Dear Chairmen and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

As mayor of the City of Shaker Heights, I respectfully request your support for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in fiscal year 2027 to fund the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This initiative provides effective crisis intervention by having licensed mental health professionals respond alongside our police and firefighters/paramedics. First CALL prioritizes proactive de-escalation and connects individuals in distress with essential services. This helps reduce risks during responses, eases the strain on local emergency rooms, and helps us use public safety resources efficiently.

Shaker Heights piloted the program in 2023, worked regionally to expand it to Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights in 2024, and led efforts to secure significant grant funding that allows the regional program to operate for two years. We are now seeking state support to ensure First CALL continues successfully through a third year and beyond.

During its first three months of operation, the regional First CALL program successfully addressed 170 active crisis calls, managed 408 additional referrals, and completed 758 follow-ups after a crisis. With help from the state, projections indicate that First CALL will serve more than 2,200 residents annually.

Lastly, the First CALL program is a scalable model for other communities across Ohio. It demonstrates that effective crisis intervention can be collaborative and replicable. By investing in this program, we are improving crisis response today while paving the way for a system that can adapt and respond to future challenges related to mental health crises.

I urge you to support the First CALL program to improve community health and public safety.

Sincerely

David E. Weiss Mayor, City of Shaker Heights

Chris Ronayne Cuyahoga County Executive



February 25, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13th Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

# RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program

Dear Chairmen and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

The First CALL Program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage), a regional mental health response program recently launched in five Cuyahoga County communities, is improving the safety of our first responders and fostering hope across our community. By integrating mental health professionals and first responders into crisis response teams, First CALL is prioritizing de-escalation during emergencies and connecting individuals in distress with essential services.

I joined the mayors of all five participating communities in May 2024 to announce the expansion of the First CALL program, which first piloted in Shaker Heights and is now newly expanded to Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights. This regional collaboration is building on Shaker Heights' blueprint while working together to ensure that Cuyahoga County residents receive the best services.

During its first three months of operation, the regional First CALL program has successfully addressed 170 active crisis calls, managed 408 additional referrals, and completed 758 follow-ups after a crisis. Projections show that First CALL will serve more than 2,200 residents annually.

Additionally, the First CALL program is a model for other communities. The program is demonstrating that effective crisis intervention can be collaborative, can be expanded regionally, and can be replicated.

I urge you to support Shaker Heights' request for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in fiscal year 2027 to fund the regional First CALL program. With your support, we can ensure the success of our efforts to provide compassionate and effective care to those in need of help, improve safety, and ease the strain on our public safety resources. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

**Chris Ronayne** Cuyahoga County Executive



February 24, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

### RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program

Dear Chairpersons and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees,

As the regional communication center for emergency services in Northeast Ohio, Chagrin Valley Dispatch Center (CVD) requests your support for \$400,000 in state funding for fiscal year 2027 to support the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). The initiative began in Shaker Heights and recently expanded to Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights—all of which are CVD-participating communities that operate out of the same dispatch center.

Through First CALL, licensed social workers accompany and/or assist first responders in responding to emergency calls to provide crisis de-escalation and connect those in crisis to necessary mental health services. CVD is a partner in coordinating the appropriate response. The licensed social workers continue to provide follow-up care to reduce the need for recurring emergency calls into our dispatch center.

The requested funding will strengthen our newly expanded First CALL program, promote regional collaboration, and allow the program to continue successfully for three years and beyond. Moreover, First CALL is compiling and analyzing its data so that our model can continue to expand regionally and also be replicated in other communities across the state.

We urge your support for the First CALL program, which is vital for the safety of our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nick DiCicco

Nick DiCicco, Director

recovery resources

Partners in health. Partners in hope.

An affiliate of the MetroHealth System

February 24, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13th Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program

Dear Chairpersons and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees,

Recovery Resources requests your support for \$400,000 in state funding for fiscal year 2027 to support the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). The initiative began in Shaker Heights and recently expanded to Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights.

Through First CALL, Recovery Resources' licensed social workers and certified peer supporters accompany and/or assist first responders in responding to emergency calls to provide crisis de-escalation and connect those in crisis to necessary mental health services. Recovery Resources is a partner in coordinating the appropriate response. The licensed social workers continue to provide follow-up care to reduce the need for recurring emergency calls into our dispatch center.

The requested funding will strengthen our newly expanded First CALL program, promote regional collaboration, and allow the program to continue successfully for three years and beyond. Moreover, First CALL is compiling and analyzing its data so that our model can continue to expand regionally and also be replicated in other communities across the state.

We urge your support for the First CALL program, which is vital for the safety of our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by: SEOM GOERMIT -532B2C0F4E49404.

Seona Goerndt President & CEO



*Chair* Adam Bechler, CIMA, AIF

*Treasurer* Sheila M. Beck, CPA

Chair, Associate Board of Directors Brennan Tilow

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\*denotes deceased



4269 Pearl Rd., Cleveland, OH 44109 (216) 431-4131 I www.recres.org



February 28, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

## **RE:** Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program.

Dear Chairmen and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

The mayors of Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights are united in our support for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in fiscal year 2027 to fund the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This critical initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and is currently expanding across our five cities, has proven to be an invaluable resource in our collective efforts to provide effective crisis intervention and support for our communities.

Through the First CALL program, licensed social workers accompany our first responders to emergencies. By prioritizing proactive de-escalation and connecting individuals in distress with essential services, we enhance outcomes and reduce risks during responses. This initiative improves community health and safety while addressing mental health issues and easing the strain on local emergency rooms and public safety resources.

During its first three months of operation, the regional First CALL program has successfully addressed 170 active crisis calls, managed 408 additional referrals, and completed 758 follow-ups after a crisis. With help from the state, projections indicate that First CALL will serve more than 2,200 residents annually, showcasing its potential for growth and impact.

Moreover, the First CALL program is a model for other communities, demonstrating that effective crisis intervention can be collaborative and replicable. By investing in this program, we are not just addressing current needs; we are paving the way for a system that can adapt and respond to future challenges related to mental health crises.

Please support the First CALL program to expand our commitment to the safety and health of our communities. With your support, we can realize the program's full potential and make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless individuals and families throughout Northeast Ohio. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Kahlil Seren Mayor, City of Cleveland Heights

40 SEVERANCE CIRCLE, CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OHIO 44118



40 SEVERANCE CIRCLE DRIVE, CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OHIO 44118 - Telephone 216-291-4444

February 24, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13th Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215

The Honorable Jerry Cirino **Ohio Senate** 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 4321

RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program.

Dear Chairpersons and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees,

As law enforcement officers dedicated to ensuring the safety of our communities, we are reaching out to request \$400,000 in funding for fiscal year 2027 to support the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This essential initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and has expanded to Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights, plays a crucial role in enhancing community safety.

The First CALL program effectively trains our officers and licensed social workers to respond to crises. While we focus on public safety and crime prevention, the licensed social workers employ proactive de-escalation techniques and connect individuals in distress with necessary services.

Data-driven results are vital for law enforcement agencies, ensuring that resources are used effectively. Our cities and departments have invested in this program because the results demonstrate its success. In the upcoming year, we anticipate assisting over 2,200 residents. A partnership with the state will help make this possible.

The Divisions of Police and Fire in our cities are committed to this important alternative crisis response effort. The requested funding will strengthen our newly expanded First CALL program, promote regional collaboration, and enable the program to continue successfully for three years and beyond. This funding will also help show that our model can be replicated in many other communities.

We urge your support for the First CALL program, which is vital for the safety of our communities. With your backing, we can enhance its impact on many lives across our region. Thank you for your consideration of this vital program.

James Harry

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Britton

Chief of Police, City of Cleveland Heights

ames L. Harry

Chief of Fire, City of Cleveland Heights



Mayor Kim A. Thomas 26789 Highland Road Richmond Heights, Ohio 44143 P: (216) 486-2474

January 26, 2024

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budge request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL Program.

Dear Chairmen and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

The mayors of Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights are united in our support for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in fiscal year 2027 to fund the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This critical initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and is currently expanding across our five cities, has proven to be an invaluable resource in our collective efforts to provide effective crisis intervention and support for our communities.

Through the First CALL program, licensed social workers accompany our first responders to emergencies. By prioritizing proactive de-escalation and connecting individuals in distress with essential services, we enhance outcomes and reduce risks during responses. This initiative improves community health and safety while addressing mental health issues and easing the strain on local emergency rooms and public safety resources.

During its first three months of operation, the regional First CALL program has successfully addressed 170 active crisis calls, managed 408 additional referrals, and completed 758 follow-ups after a crisis. With help from the state, projections indicate that First CALL will serve more than 2,200 residents annually, showcasing its potential for growth and impact.

Moreover, the First CALL program is a model for other communities, demonstrating that effective crisis intervention can be collaborative and replicable. By investing in this program, we are not just addressing current needs; we are paving the way for a system that can adapt and respond to future challenges related to mental health crises.

Please support the First CALL program to expand our commitment to the safety and health of our communities. With your support, we can realize the program's full potential and make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless individuals and families throughout Northeast Ohio. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Kim A Thomas

Kim A. Thomas, Mayor City of Richmond Heights, Ohio



26789 Highland Road Richmond Heights, Ohio 44143-1429 P: 216.486.2474 F: 216.383.6320 www.richmondheightsohio.org

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program.

Dear Chairpersons and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees,

As law enforcement officers dedicated to ensuring the safety of our communities, we are reaching out to request \$400,000 in funding for fiscal year 2027 to support the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This essential initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and has expanded to Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights, plays a crucial role in enhancing community safety.

The First CALL program effectively trains our officers and licensed social workers to respond to crises. While we focus on public safety and crime prevention, the licensed social workers employ proactive de-escalation techniques and connect individuals in distress with necessary services.

Data-driven results are vital for law enforcement agencies, ensuring that resources are used effectively. Our cities and departments have invested in this program because the results demonstrate its success. In the upcoming year, we anticipate assisting over 2,200 residents. A partnership with the state will help make this possible.

The Divisions of Police and Fire in our cities are committed to this important alternative crisis response effort. The requested funding will strengthen our newly expanded First CALL program, promote regional collaboration, and enable the program to continue successfully for three years and beyond. This funding will also help show that our model can be replicated in many other communities.

We urge your support for the First CALL program, which is vital for the safety of our communities. With your backing, we can enhance its impact on many lives across our region. Thank you for your consideration of this vital program.

May Houmon

Marc J. Neumann Chief, Division of Fire

Calvin D. Williams Chief, Division of Police



February 26, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

## RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program

Dear Chairmen and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

As mayor of the City of Shaker Heights, I respectfully request your support for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in fiscal year 2027 to fund the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This initiative provides effective crisis intervention by having licensed mental health professionals respond alongside our police and firefighters/paramedics. First CALL prioritizes proactive de-escalation and connects individuals in distress with essential services. This helps reduce risks during responses, eases the strain on local emergency rooms, and helps us use public safety resources efficiently.

Shaker Heights piloted the program in 2023, worked regionally to expand it to Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights in 2024, and led efforts to secure significant grant funding that allows the regional program to operate for two years. We are now seeking state support to ensure First CALL continues successfully through a third year and beyond.

During its first three months of operation, the regional First CALL program successfully addressed 170 active crisis calls, managed 408 additional referrals, and completed 758 follow-ups after a crisis. With help from the state, projections indicate that First CALL will serve more than 2,200 residents annually.

Lastly, the First CALL program is a scalable model for other communities across Ohio. It demonstrates that effective crisis intervention can be collaborative and replicable. By investing in this program, we are improving crisis response today while paving the way for a system that can adapt and respond to future challenges related to mental health crises.

I urge you to support the First CALL program to improve community health and public safety.

Sine David E. Weiss

Mayor, City of Shaker Heights

#### **CITY OF SHAKER HEIGHTS |** Office of the Mayor

3400 Lee Road Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120 P 216.491.1410 F 216.491.1465 Ohio Relay Service 711 www.shakerheightsoh.gov www.shaker.life



February 24, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program.

Dear Chairpersons and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees,

As law enforcement officers dedicated to ensuring the safety of our communities, we are reaching out to request \$400,000 in funding for fiscal year 2027 to support the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This essential initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and has expanded to Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights, plays a crucial role in enhancing community safety.

The First CALL program effectively trains our officers and licensed social workers to respond to crises. While we focus on public safety and crime prevention, the licensed social workers employ proactive de-escalation techniques and connect individuals in distress with necessary services.

Data-driven results are vital for law enforcement agencies, ensuring that resources are used effectively. Our cities and departments have invested in this program because the results demonstrate its success. In the upcoming year, we anticipate assisting over 2,200 residents. A partnership with the state will help make this possible.

The Divisions of Police and Fire in our cities are committed to this important alternative crisis response effort. The requested funding will strengthen our newly expanded First CALL program, promote regional collaboration, and enable the program to continue successfully for three years and beyond. This funding will also help show that our model can be replicated in many other communities.

We urge your support for the First CALL program, which is vital for the safety of our communities. With your backing, we can enhance its impact on many lives across our region. Thank you for your consideration of this vital program.

#### **CITY OF SHAKER HEIGHTS**

3400 Lee Road Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120 P 216.491.1400 F 216.491.1465 Ohio Relay Service 711 www.shakerheightsoh.gov www.shaker.life Sincerely, Wayne D. Hudson

Chief of Police, City of Shaker Heights

Patrick F. Sweeney

Patrick F. Sweeney Chief of Fire, City of Shaker Heights



**COME TOGETHER & THRIVE** 

Georgine Welo Mayor

February 24, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215

The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

# RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program.

Dear Chairmen and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

The mayors of Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights are united in our support for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in fiscal year 2027 to fund the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This critical initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and is currently expanding across our five cities, has proven to be an invaluable resource in our collective efforts to provide effective crisis intervention and support for our communities.

Through the First CALL program, licensed social workers accompany our first responders to emergencies. By prioritizing proactive de-escalation and connecting individuals in distress with essential services, we enhance outcomes and reduce risks during responses. This initiative improves community health and safety while addressing mental health issues and easing the strain on local emergency rooms and public safety resources.

During its first three months of operation, the regional First CALL program has successfully addressed 170 active crisis calls, managed 408 additional referrals, and completed 758 follow-ups after a crisis. With help from the state, projections indicate that First CALL will serve more than 2,200 residents annually, showcasing its potential for growth and impact.

Moreover, the First CALL program is a model for other communities, demonstrating that effective crisis intervention can be collaborative and replicable. By investing in this program, we are not just addressing current needs; we are paving the way for a system that can adapt and respond to future challenges related to mental health crises.

Please support the First CALL program to expand our commitment to the safety and health of our communities. With your support, we can realize the program's full potential and make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless individuals and families throughout Northeast Ohio. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely, Georgine Welo Mayor



#### **COME TOGETHER & THRIVE**

February 24, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program.

Dear Chairpersons and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees,

As law enforcement officers dedicated to ensuring the safety of our communities, we are reaching out to request \$400,000 in funding for fiscal year 2027 to support the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This essential initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and has expanded to Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights, plays a crucial role in enhancing community safety.

The First CALL program effectively trains our officers and licensed social workers to respond to crises. While we focus on public safety and crime prevention, the licensed social workers employ proactive de-escalation techniques and connect individuals in distress with necessary services.

Data-driven results are vital for law enforcement agencies, ensuring that resources are used effectively. Our cities and departments have invested in this program because the results demonstrate its success. In the upcoming year, we anticipate assisting over 2,200 residents. A partnership with the state will help make this possible.

The Divisions of Police and Fire in our cities are committed to this important alternative crisis response effort. The requested funding will strengthen our newly expanded First CALL program, promote regional collaboration, and enable the program to continue successfully for three years and beyond. This funding will also help show that our model can be replicated in many other communities.

We urge your support for the First CALL program, which is vital for the safety of our communities. With your backing, we can enhance its impact on many lives across our region. Thank you for your consideration of this vital program.

Joseph Mays osish Mans

Chief of Police, City of South Euclid, Ohio

Dave Csire

Chief of Fire, City of South Euclid, Ohio



Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan mdb@universityheights.com 216.932.7800 x222

February 28, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13th Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program.

Dear Chair and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

On behalf of the City of University Heights, I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for a budget allocation of \$400,000 in fiscal year 2027 to fund the regional First CALL program (Crisis Assistance and Local Linkage). This critical initiative, which began in Shaker Heights and has recently expanded to the cities of Cleveland Heights, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights, has proven to be an invaluable resource in our collective efforts to provide effective crisis intervention and support for our communities.

Through the First CALL program, licensed social workers accompany our first responders to emergencies. By prioritizing proactive de-escalation and connecting individuals in distress with essential services, we enhance outcomes and reduce risks during responses. This initiative improves community health and safety while addressing mental health issues and easing the strain on local emergency rooms and public safety resources.

During its first three months of operation, the regional First CALL program has successfully addressed 170 active crisis calls, managed 408 additional referrals, and completed 758 follow-ups after a crisis. With help from the state, projections indicate that First CALL will serve more than 2,200 residents annually, showcasing its potential for growth and impact.

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The Honorable Brian Stewart The Honorable Jerry Cirino February 28, 2025 Page 2

replicable. By investing in this program, we are not just addressing current needs; we are paving the way for a system that can adapt and respond to future challenges related to mental health crises.

Please support the First CALL program to expand our commitment to the safety and health of our communities. It has already made a big difference in University Heights. With your support, we can realize the program's full potential and make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless individuals and families throughout Northeast Ohio. Thank you for your consideration and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely yours Michael Dylan Brennan

Mayor



Dustin Rogers Chief of Police (216) 932-1160



Michael D. Brennan Mayor/Safety Director (216) 932-7800



Robert Perko Chief of Fire (216) 321-1939

February 24, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart Ohio House 77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Columbus, Ohio 43215 The Honorable Jerry Cirino Ohio Senate 1 Capitol Square, Rm. 127 Columbus, Ohio 43215

#### RE: Support for Shaker Heights' state budget request of \$400,000 for the regional First CALL program.

Dear Chairpersons and Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees,

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**Dustin Rogers** 

Chief of Police, City of University Heights

Robert D. Perko AA

Robert D. Perko III Chief of Fire, City of University Heights