

CITY OF BETHLEHEM
City Council Memorandum

SUBJECT: Resolution in support of the Safe Interactions Act and the Human-services Emergency Logistic Program Act

FROM: Olga Negrón, Member of Council

TO: Members of Council

DATE: December 30, 2020

U.S. Senator Bob Casey is launching the Law Enforcement Education and Accountability for People with Disabilities (LEAD) Initiative, to help bring about racial justice and reduce the number of police interactions involving people with disabilities, often people of color. The LEAD Initiative is comprised of two bills – the Safe Interactions Act and the Human-services Emergency Logistic Program (HELP) Act – which would reduce calls to 9-1-1 call systems regarding non-criminal emergencies and provide robust training to law enforcement on interacting with people with disabilities, including those experiencing a mental health crisis.

Attached is a proposed resolution supporting the Safe Interactions Act and the Human-services Emergency Logistic Program Act. I respectfully request that Council consider the attached resolution at the January 5, 2021 City Council Meeting.



Olga Negrón
Member of Council

CC: Mayor
J. Spirk, Jr., Esq.

RESOLUTION NO. 2021- _____

WHEREAS, U.S. Senator Bob Casey is launching the Law Enforcement Education and Accountability for People with Disabilities (LEAD) Initiative, to help bring about racial justice and reduce the number of police interactions involving people with disabilities, often people of color. The LEAD Initiative is comprised of two bills – the Safe Interactions Act and the Human-services Emergency Logistic Program (HELP) Act – which would reduce calls to 9-1-1 call systems regarding non-criminal emergencies and provide robust training to law enforcement on interacting with people with disabilities, including those experiencing a mental health crisis.

WHEREAS, law enforcement officers must be prepared for interactions with people with disabilities, yet the training they are offered is sometimes minimal and often varies greatly by agency, state, region, and municipality.

WHEREAS, available research has found that people with disabilities are more than two and a half times more likely to be victims of a crime and three times more likely to be victims of a serious crime than people without a disability. These occurrences lead them to have an increased number of interactions with law enforcement officers, who may be unprepared for or lack knowledge about the best approach for communicating with people with different disabilities.

WHEREAS, the HELP Act would divert non-criminal, non-fire, and non-medical emergency calls from 9-1-1 systems to state and regional 2-1-1 systems, while providing resources and funding to improve 2-1-1 referral systems. The bill would create an oversight system for the 2-1-1 networks comprised of community members who represent older adults, people with disabilities, ethnic and racial community members, and members of other communities.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Bethlehem support the Safe Interactions Act and Human-services Emergency Logistics Program Act, both introduced by U.S. Senator Bob Casey, and urges the U.S. Congress to enact such legislation as soon as possible in order to further racial justice and potentially help reduce the number of interactions between the police and individuals with disabilities in crisis.

Sponsored by: _____

ADOPTED by Council this day of , 2021.

President of Council

ATTEST:

City Clerk