

From: [Sonya McVay](#)
To: [Public Safety Subcommittee Comment](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Police Mental Health Model, Community empowerment plan
Date: Monday, January 25, 2021 2:54:53 PM

My name is Sonya McVay Straub.

I am the founder and executive director of The 6 Foundation. A Santa Rosa based non-profit committed to the health and wellness of our first responders and veterans. I love Santa Rosa and all that she offers: diversity, opportunity, heroism and resilience. I love being a part of a town and of a community that gets back up every time she gets knocked down. This town inspires me to be a better woman and to live into my community's legacy of hope.

Over the past several years, I have had the honor of working with our local veterans, firefighters and law enforcement. My office provides anywhere between 200 and 550 sessions of sports therapy for our first responders each month. Last month, 80 of those sessions provided were for the SRPD. The men and women of our local LE and their families who serve this community are physically and emotionally exhausted. The weight for a first responder is heavy, now more than ever. Morale is low. Depression is sky rocketing. Our resources are small. It is heartbreaking to see the people that I serve and that serve our community publicly being called trash. It is heartbreaking that within Marylou's memorandum lies a TBL flag that has now been marked as something vile.

My hope is, that our county keeps inviting conversations for change versus reinforcing bias of every kind, forcing sides and that as we fight for equality, our hearts stay open. That we would see each of our responder populations beyond their flags and into the men and women behind them. That we would mourn our losses together, rise together and grow together. And that as we push for unity. We are indeed the torch bearers of listening and of grace, of good and of hope. And those qualities provide the change that we all desperately want. Applied equally across race, gender and occupation, they offer brighter future of oneness and healing for our town. If our beyond-exhausted first responders knew that unconditional support was behind each step they took into hell, I believe we'd see the most robust departments in the country.

As a BIPOC woman, local entrepreneur, LGTQIA family member, combat veteran's wife, mother and as a trauma survivor, I would humbly request that the gross actions of violence attempting to rob the symbolism of the TBL flag be denied. And that we be allowed to proudly honor our fallen and walk forward with this symbol of hope. Together, let us steal back what is rightfully ours and stand firmly in who we are to become. Together, let us link arms and kick darkness out of our town while bearing all of her beautiful colors, sexes, preferences, identity's, religion's, ages, and creeds. Together, may we become the nation's guidepost for a united front. Hope, if you will, is my ask.

Sincerely and humbly,

Sonya Straub
Executive Director, Founder
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