



National Federation of Democratic Women Resolution #4 Supporting Mental Health Professionals as Crisis First Responders

WHEREAS, persons experiencing a mental or emotional crisis need intervention by someone trained to manage such situations who can accompany law enforcement or may even be the first responder to de-escalate a situation before it becomes violent. Since many police officers receive many more hours of firearms training than in crisis intervention with people behaving erratically or in a frightened, uncooperative way, brutality and even deaths occur far too often during distress calls; and

WHEREAS, according to *USA Today*, 1200 people having a mental health crisis were fatally shot in 2020, and *The Washington Post* has reported that since 2015, nearly a quarter of all people killed by police officers had known mental illness. *USA Today* reported, "Nicolas Chavez, 27, was having a mental breakdown in Houston when he was shot 21 times, with 28 officers on the scene. Too often people in mental crises are treated as criminals instead of people needing interventional concern and care"; and

WHEREAS, ABC News reported that in 2013, 30,000 students ages 10 years-old and younger were arrested at school, including a six-year old. During the COVID pandemic, childhood mental disorders have increased alarmingly. School counselors, psychologists, social workers, and School Resource Officers are often woefully understaffed to manage students suffering emotional meltdowns or anxiety disorders.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the National Federation of Democratic Women supports an across-the-board policy change that puts mental health professionals in the forefront and in partnership with law enforcement officers when dealing with persons in the community suffering from a mental illness, a breakdown, or emotional crisis. **FURTHER RESOLVED** that NFDW supports adding trained, certified mental health professionals at schools to serve as first responders in situations involving behavioral issues that could escalate into student aggression. Such measures value the lives of every citizen.