



### **Letter of Support for the CERT Program**

Hello,

My name is Nashauna Johnson-Lenoir, and I am the Founding Director of Journie Inc. Journie is a fiscally sponsored organization dedicated to enhancing community health through youth development, health and wellness initiatives, resource referrals, and social justice advocacy.

I am writing to express Journie Inc.'s full support for the CERT program. The Rochester community urgently needs the continuation of CERT, as it provides a critical bridge between law enforcement and the community. CERT team members, who are deeply familiar with the neighborhoods they serve, play an essential role in de-escalating crisis situations and fostering trust between residents and police officers. Their cultural understanding and lived experiences allow them to mediate conflicts effectively, ensuring that interactions do not escalate into violence.

Over the past few years, CERT has demonstrated its value by being present during critical incidents. Following a tragic shooting downtown that claimed the life of a young man, CERT members were on the ground, providing essential support and helping to maintain peace. Prior to CERT's involvement, many Black residents in Rochester feared interactions with law enforcement. CERT has helped alleviate these fears by distinguishing individuals who may be experiencing mental health crises from those who might pose a threat, aiding police in responding appropriately.

Beyond crisis intervention, CERT is a visible and trusted presence at community events, offering support to those in need. Their mission strengthens the fabric of our community by fostering collaboration, trust, and safety. Additionally, CERT representatives actively participate in leadership discussions, advocating for the needs of underserved populations and ensuring that their voices are heard.

The CERT program is an indispensable asset to Rochester, and we strongly urge continued investment in its mission. We fully support CERT and hope you will as well. Thank you,

Nashauna Johnson-Lenoir

Founding Director

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“Be Optimistic” - Sounds of Blackness