

Letter of Support: Community Engagement Resource Team (CERT)

Dear Members of the Minnesota Senate,

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the continued funding and operation of the Community Engagement Resource Team (CERT) and to highlight the powerful impact this initiative has had, and continues to have, on the Rochester community. CERT plays a vital role in fostering safety, trust, and deeper connections between law enforcement and the residents they serve, while addressing the complex, diverse needs of our growing population.

In recent years, communities across Minnesota and beyond have been navigating challenging societal dynamics, ranging from increased cultural diversity to heightened conversations around public safety and trust in institutions. Rochester is no exception. CERT has emerged as a key bridge between the community and law enforcement, building relationships and trust in ways that traditional policing models alone cannot achieve.

Why CERT Matters:

1. **Proactive Community Engagement:** CERT goes beyond crisis response by proactively engaging with community members, listening to concerns, and educating the public. This helps prevent conflict and misunderstandings before they escalate.
2. **Culturally Competent Policing:** Rochester is increasingly diverse, and CERT provides culturally sensitive outreach, ensuring that all members of the community feel heard, respected, and protected.
3. **Mental Health and Crisis Support:** CERT officers are trained to respond compassionately to individuals experiencing mental health crises, helping de-escalate tense situations while connecting residents to critical services.
4. **Youth and Family Support:** By working directly with schools, youth organizations, and families, CERT fosters mentorship and encourages positive pathways for young people, reducing the risk of future involvement in the criminal justice system.
5. **Building Long-Term Trust:** Through community forums, neighborhood outreach, and events, CERT has strengthened trust between residents and law enforcement, an essential element for public safety and social cohesion.

The positive outcomes of CERT's work are evident in the countless success stories from Rochester residents who have benefited from their compassionate approach. Whether it's

helping a family navigate a crisis, providing resources to those in need, or simply being present in the community as approachable, trusted figures, CERT makes a profound difference in people's lives.

As Rochester continues to grow and evolve, programs like CERT are not just beneficial, they are essential. We urge you to recognize the tremendous value CERT brings to our community and to ensure that it receives the support it needs to continue this vital work.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing commitment to public safety and community well-being.

Sincerely,

Charlie Perkins

Board Chair, United Way of Southeast Minnesota

Rochester, Minnesota

Truth 2 Da Youth Mentorship Program

Rochester, Minnesota

March 26, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of Truth 2 Da Youth Mentorship Program, I am honored to submit this letter in full support of William "Bud" Whitehorn and his passionate advocacy for the continued funding of CERT (Community Emergency Response Team).

Bud is not just a voice in the community—he is a living, breathing example of what it means to pour into the lives of others, standing in the gap for those who are often overlooked, unheard, and underserved.

Over the years, Bud has been an unwavering force of change in our communities, serving tirelessly to protect, uplift, and empower people, especially in times of crisis.

His commitment to CERT is not just about emergency response—it's about restoring hope where there is fear, building trust where there is doubt, and providing stability where there is chaos.

Bud's leadership and heart for service have saved lives, strengthened neighborhoods, and cultivated a culture of preparedness and resilience in communities that need it most.

At Truth 2 Da Youth, we understand firsthand the importance of having individuals like Bud leading the charge. His dedication aligns perfectly with our mission to break cycles of violence, addiction, and incarceration by investing in the future of our young people.

Bud doesn't just respond to emergencies—he teaches, mentors, and models what it means to be a servant leader. He embodies the very principles we instill in the youth we mentor: accountability, compassion, and unwavering faith.

Without continued funding for CERT, communities will lose more than just a resource—they will lose a lifeline. The work Bud and his team do cannot be measured in dollars, but in lives impacted, futures changed, and hope restored.

As an organization rooted in empowering future generations, we urge you to recognize the profound impact of CERT and the indispensable role Bud Whitehorn plays in its success.

We wholeheartedly support Bud's testimony and humbly ask that you continue to invest in CERT, ensuring that communities across Minnesota remain protected, empowered, and prepared for whatever may come.

Sincerely,

Charles Jackson, Founder

Valerie Mangskau, President

Truth 2 Da Youth Mentorship Program

Rochester, Minnesota

truth2dayouth.org