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Commissioner L. Julius M. Turman
The Police Commission of San Francisco
1245 3rd Street, 6th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94158

Dear Commissioner Turman and Members of the Police Commission;

On behalf of the Mental Health Association of San Francisco, I request consideration be given to amend the draft Department General Order (DGO) "Use of Electronic Control Devices (ECD)," before any decisive action is taken. In the past, we testified before you on our opposition to tasers--**BUT now, we want to make sure the taser use policy is responsible and respectful towards people with mental illnesses.**

Mental health advocates in San Francisco strongly believe **Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officers should be the ONLY police officers authorized to use these electronic control devices.** For the past five years, we have actively participated in the CIT Working Group: convening monthly meetings, chairing the Work Group and various committees, organizing the Annual CIT Awards ceremony and most importantly developing the CIT training curriculum that has trained 800+ officers to date. We know what the 40-hour training program consist of—in fact, members of our organization teach specific modules at each training and have been doing this for many years. We believe this training is essential for all officers, especially those who will be authorized to use tasers. **People with mental illnesses are an especially vulnerable high-risk population to taser adverse effects--including death--when these supposedly less lethal weapons are used on them.**

The CIT 40-hour training teaches officers de-escalation techniques and how to use time and distance in crisis situations. There are scenarios and practice sessions whereby the police officers learn and practice these skills. The specialized training covers many aspects of mental health—considered extremely important when working with many people on the streets of our City. With sufficient resources—human and fiscal—it is possible to train the entire SFPD within the next two to three years, including bi-annual refresher updates. This would give sufficient time to assure the SFPD policy meets all acceptable standards; data is collected, investigated and analyzed to determine if any changes are needed; and provide ALL SFPD officers with the mental health knowledge and skills needed to respond with the least amount of force during crisis situations.

Lastly, we want also to suggest stating **prohibiting use of these weapons in schools and on school campuses and stating exclusion from shooting pregnant woman and older adults.** Children are experiencing great mental distress and expressing fear of going to school. SFPD officers should be prohibited from using these weapons in schools, expressing clearly, they should not be used on children under the age of 18. Moreover, the policy needs to spell out certain exclusionary groups for obvious reasons. Thank you for considering our requests.

Sincerely,

