

# 2021 Big Ideas Final Proposal: *Not the Police*

## Problem Statement

Black Americans are **2.3x more likely** than white Americans to be killed by the police.<sup>1</sup> Police killings of Black Americans and at-risk citizens are often linked to an initial 911 call reporting a non-violent incident. These tragic cases include allegedly using counterfeit notes (George Floyd), sleeping intoxicated in a parked car (Rayshard Brooks), or suffering from a mental breakdown (Tanisha Anderson). **Their deaths were preventable.** One impactful lever to reduce the amount of police violence is reducing people's exposure to the police. For instance, NYPD's stricter oversight of Stop & Frisk in 2013 led to a rapid decrease in police stops, leading to 37 fewer police stops with use of force toward Black Americans daily.<sup>2</sup>

**1 in 4 Berkeley Police Department (BPD) calls for service** in the past 6 months involved "quality of life" violations, such as vandalism, disorderly conduct, and liquor law violations.<sup>3</sup> Our interviews with homeless outreach and mental health crisis workers in Berkeley revealed that residents and merchants do not know who to call in a non-emergency. Our survey of UC Berkeley students bolster this observation; 73% of young people aged 18 to 25 are not familiar with the 311 non-emergency helpline/app. As such, residents resort to calling 911 for help for non-emergency situations. When police respond in non-violent situations, unhoused individuals feel unsafe and Black Americans face a higher risk of experiencing police violence.

Today, the public is increasingly aware of the Black Lives Matter movement. **72% of Californians** support the reallocation of police responsibilities and funding for responding to non-violent situations to social and mental health services.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, city governments have formed working groups and passed legislation to implement public safety alternatives. To fill this urgent need for public safety alternatives, we are developing an AI messaging platform, [\*Not the Police\*](#), that directs residents experiencing non-emergencies to non-police first responders. **Our mission is to make non-emergency calls as easy and intuitive as calling 911.**

## Existing Solutions

**Grassroots movements and city legislature.** Grassroots and nonprofit organizations have fought police brutality for years. Berkeley and Oakland are at the roots of the police abolitionist movement, being home to organizations such as [Critical Resistance](#) and the [Anti-Police Terror Project](#) (APTP). Bay Area cities are reimagining public safety as calls to defund the police grow. An Oakland public safety task force, headed by APTP, recently recommended that the City Council transfer the 911 call center out of the police department, and invest in gender-based violence prevention and violence interrupters (community members who deescalate situations before they become violent). APTP also launched Mental Health (MH) First Oakland, a non-police alternative that dispatches volunteers to respond to psychiatric emergencies, substance abuse, and domestic violence. Additionally, Berkeley City Council has passed legislation like BerkDOT to reduce police violence, shifting traffic enforcement responsibilities from BPD to a newly-created Department of Transportation.

*Not the Police* approaches police violence from a similar angle, namely by reducing the number of encounters that residents have with the police. While BerkDOT has reallocated funding to non-police enforcement for

traffic stops, our innovation fills the gap for cases involving mental health crises, the unhoused population, and other non-violent situations. Although the City of Berkeley and organizations such as APTP provide non-police alternatives, the public is largely unaware of these services due to their low digital presence.

**Website aggregators.** There are other ways to find the appropriate phone number to call in non-emergency situations. [Dontcallthepolice.com](https://dontcallthepolice.com) consolidates contact information for non-police alternatives. Users can view a list of organizations and their phone numbers, filtered by location. Similarly, one can independently look up the phone number to call on their own. However, sifting through information on a website aggregator to determine which organization best fits the situation, or looking for contact info on a service's website takes time. In a non-emergency, the time spent navigating these websites to find the right phone number could allow a situation to escalate. Additionally, city services occasionally change their staff and contact information – as the City of Berkeley did recently – so online sources would not reflect these changes in a timely manner.

**311 helpline/app.** 311 helplines/mobile apps enable residents to report non-emergencies to a municipal agency, serving as a non-police alternative. 311 responses, however, are limited to government services; they do not utilize the resources of influential grassroots/nonprofit organizations. Furthermore, a majority of younger residents have not heard of 311 services. Our survey of 90 respondents (18 to 25 years old) revealed that 73% of people were not familiar with the 311 concept. 311 apps also face high friction in user adoption because residents have to install and learn to use a separate app. Although we have soft-launched in the Bay Area, *Not the Police* will be able to easily scale across the U.S. because our platform spans geographies. Our team will onboard first responder services in new cities while maintaining the same platform infrastructure.

## Landscape Analysis

	Services' Websites	311 Helpline/App	Education Workshops	Website Aggregators	<i>Not the Police</i>
Guides caller to the right service	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
Provides variety of options for non-police services	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Accessible and convenient	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Up-to-date and accurate info on services	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Data tracking	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓

Figure 1: Competitive analysis of landscape of non-police alternatives

# Proposed Innovation

## How It Works

[Not the Police](#) is an **AI messaging platform that enables residents to easily call non-police first responders** (e.g., MH First Oakland, Berkeley's Mobile Crisis Team) for non-emergencies. *Not the Police* utilizes Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques, such as named-entity recognition and word embedding, to analyze users' messages and provide fast, accurate responses to questions and requests for service. Our team will use Machine Learning to train the platform's algorithm on a large data set of messages so as to automatically read complex messages and respond with the best services in one step. We have built our v1 prototype as a chatbot on Facebook Messenger. We are exploring a transition to a stand-alone mobile app by observing residents and city stakeholders' preferences through discovery interviews and user testing.

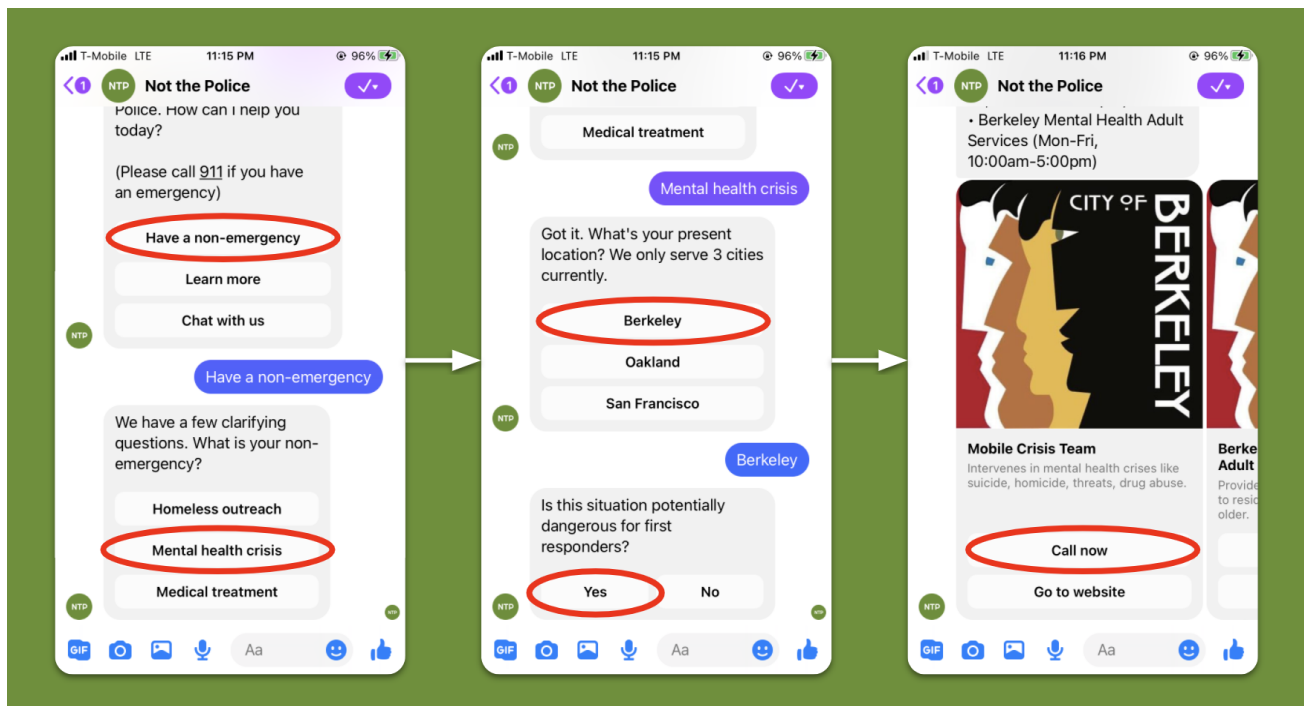


Figure 2: The user's happy path using our AI messaging platform

Users begin the process on the Facebook Messenger app by telling the chatbot (via text or guided buttons) that they are experiencing a non-emergency. Users then answer a short list of questions about their situation. Our AI platform takes in the user's answers as inputs and **automatically provides the user with a list of suitable first responder services**, along with their respective hours of operation. Once decided on a service, the user can **call the chosen first responder service** at the tap of the "Call Now" button – all without leaving the chat window on the Messenger app. Users also have the option to send their message straight to our (human) team, where we will be alerted and can respond accordingly.

## Value Proposition

Our platform makes calling a non-police first responder directly **more efficient than existing methods**. Currently, finding the right non-emergency service is difficult given the plethora of service websites and lack

of a central source of truth. Jeff Buell, Mental Health Program Supervisor for the City of Berkeley, informed us in our discovery call that our product would be a useful “marketing tool” for city services. *Not the Police* serves a pre-dispatch role of educating residents about alternative first responders and streamlining the process of getting help (see *Figure 2* below). The platform increases the “fit” between a caller’s situation and the service picking up the call, saving time for both residents and city services. Efficient dispatch is valuable because speed is of the essence even in responding to non-emergencies.

### CURRENT WORKFLOW



### NEW WORKFLOW

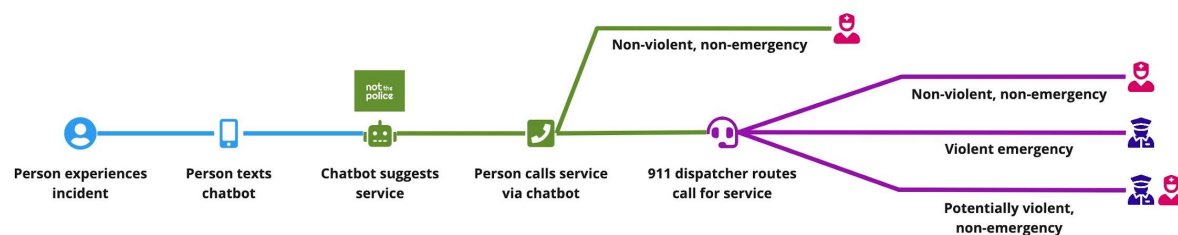


Figure 3: Flowchart illustrating how *Not the Police* integrates into the existing dispatch workflow

*Not the Police* is **highly accessible**, even in its prototype phase, because it is built on top of Messenger, a free and popular instant messaging platform. Additionally, our ideal first user is the **Gen Z/Millennial social media user** who volunteers for and seeks out activist causes. People in this segment not only resist bringing police presence into their communities, but also prefer using tech-enabled services like chatbots to meet their everyday needs. With *Not the Police*, users can conveniently search for non-police alternatives on a familiar platform that they already check frequently, instead of installing and navigating an external app like SF311.

*Not the Police* also possesses the **advantage of integration** with city services. Our team has been in contact with university, nonprofit, and city stakeholders in the Bay Area (such as Berkeley City Councilmember Rigel Robinson and Berkeley Fire Department Assistant Chief David Sprague) from the get-go. Partnering with these stakeholders empowers us to consistently provide accurate, up-to-date information that is lacking in online sources such as crowdsourced spreadsheets/aggregators and antiquated government websites. These partners also have existing followings; they will assist our team in marketing the platform and increasing residents’ top-of-mind awareness of *Not the Police*. Furthermore, we have the opportunity to share data two-way with our partner services to optimize our platform’s online-to-offline impact.

By redirecting “quality of life” calls to alternative first responders, *Not the Police* lowers the exposure that at-risk residents have to the police. Decreased police exposure leads to lower levels of police brutality, saving lives. Our solution also benefits police departments by **freeing up their time spent on non-emergencies** to focus on handling serious, life-threatening situations. Marcel is a reservist Police Inspector in Singapore; he

knows firsthand the amount of time that police officers spend managing minor, non-violent incidents. We have also interviewed three UCPD officers – Lt. Sabrina Reich, Sgt. James Jenkins, and Cpl. DiMarco Hoskins. They support educating UC students on non-police alternatives and reallocating police resources for cases involving homelessness and mental health.

## Implementation Timeline

Our first-year goal is to launch a pilot program in Berkeley to evaluate our platform's efficacy and explore the feasibility of a transition to a stand-alone mobile app. We have demoed our product to UC Berkeley's Mental Health Response Committee, and been in contact with the City of Berkeley's Fair & Impartial Policing Working Group and the working group revamping the city's dispatch process. **We have 3 main implementation objectives for year one:** 1) expand the user base, 2) iterate on the product to meet users' needs, and 3) nurture partnerships with university/city services. We will check in on our metrics' progress mid-year and determine if new success metrics are necessary. Beyond year one, we hope to expand upon the success of the City of Berkeley pilot and grow our platform in Oakland, Richmond, and other progressive Bay Area cities.

Time	Marketing	Product Development	Partnerships
<b>Jun – Aug 2021</b>	<p>Invite 200 friends and family by sharing Messenger link; ask invited contacts to refer 1 person each</p> <p>Write a Medium article and 2 Tweets to promote <i>Not the Police</i> to Bay Area audience</p> <p>Build a landing page for product; include link to chatbot and basic information</p>	<p>Conduct 8 usability tests with ideal first users over Zoom</p> <p>Conduct 5 discovery interviews with 911 dispatchers</p>	<p>Set up a meeting with Berkeley Fire Department Chief Brannigan who leads the committee redesigning dispatch processes for the City of Berkeley</p> <p>Arrange 2nd meeting with UC Berkeley's Mental Health Response Committee to discuss integration of <i>Not the Police</i> into Resident Advisers' training and new student orientation</p>
<b>Sep – Nov 2021</b>	<p>Reach out to 20 grassroots organizations/activism pages to promote our product</p> <p>Create digital marketing collateral using Figma/Adobe Illustrator</p> <p>Run 2 targeted Facebook/Instagram ad campaigns, A/B test to determine ideal user profile</p>	<p>Synthesize feedback from usability tests and interviews</p> <p>Interview 10 users to anticipate user reception to our transition to a stand-alone mobile app</p> <p>Spec out mobile app development (including WCAG 2.1 compliance) and write Machine Learning-based algorithms for stand-alone AI chatbot</p>	<p>Reconnect with Ari Neulight, Homeless Outreach Coordinator, for progress check-in</p> <p>Reach out to Berkeley grassroots organizations centered around mental health/fighting police violence (APTP, Ella Baker)</p> <p>Test platform on incoming class of UC Berkeley students (Fall 2021) and monitor their use</p> <p>Pitch and demo platform to different city services' leaders to garner support for a city pilot</p>

<b>Dec 2021 – Feb 2022</b>	Run 2 targeted social ad campaigns (1 on Facebook, 1 on Twitter) to reach ideal user profile  Place chatbot link onto City of Berkeley websites as a contact option  Pitch and demo product at Berkeley grassroots organizations' community meetings (Berkeley Free Clinic, Suitcase Clinic) to reach the unhoused and older audiences	Fine-tune chatbot response algorithm based on feedback/learnings from user testing  Test Machine Learning-based response algorithms with 5 older ( $\geq 41$ y.o.) and 5 younger ( $< 41$ y.o.) users  Conduct 5 validation tests and interviews with first responders to inform pilot	Write proposal and plan for pilot with City of Berkeley (involve working group stakeholders)  Work with UC Berkeley committee to integrate <i>Not the Police</i> into Spring 2022 student orientation
<b>Mar – Jun 2022</b>	Create promotional and informational content to onboard new UC Berkeley students to the platform during their new student orientation  Promote platform on popular activism pages on Instagram/Twitter (such as @impact, @soyouwanttotalkabout)	Conduct 8 usability tests on new mobile app to iron out any inconsistencies before the pilot  Build full website with download link, testimonials, past timeline, and established partnerships	Demo product to Oakland grassroots organizations (e.g., APTP, People's Breakfast Oakland)  Establish links with Oakland City Council, riding on the credibility from the pilot in Berkeley  Start pilot with the City of Berkeley and evaluate efficacy and use of the platform

## Measuring Success

We are measuring success in two key areas in the coming year: 1) **user growth**, and 2) **community impact**. With *Not the Police's* data tracking capabilities, our team can track when a user subscribes to the service (i.e., clicks "Get Started" on the platform), messages the service, and clicks a call-to-action button (e.g., "Call Now").

User growth rate is a leading indicator of *Not the Police's* success. We will track the number of new chatbot subscribers week-by-week. Our target is to achieve a **7% week-on-week subscriber growth**; this compounds to 31.5x in annual growth. A large user base is important to maximize reduction in police violence given the relative infrequency of calling for first responders. For context, there are 0.73 calls for 911 per U.S. resident annually.<sup>5</sup> The quicker we grow our presence in the cities we operate in, the more value we provide to residents and the greater our chances of running pilot programs in new cities. There are around 345,000 people aged 18 to 34 in Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco combined.<sup>6-8</sup> 30.3% of Americans volunteered through an organization in 2017.<sup>9</sup> Our approximate serviceable obtainable market (SOM) is, hence, 104,535 people. At our target growth rate, we will onboard around 10% of our SOM to *Not the Police* in our first year.

Community impact is, however, the ultimate goal. *Not the Police's* north-star metric is the number of calls facilitated monthly. This metric measures the amount of non-emergency responses initiated, which is a proxy for the amount of redirected "quality of life" calls from the police. We aim to increase the number of calls

facilitated by **5% monthly**, with the 1-year goal of facilitating **114 monthly calls** (~1/3 of monthly non-emergency calls across three cities) to alternative first responders. Given that 34.6% of routine police stops in NYC lead to police use of force toward Black Americans,<sup>10</sup> these redirected calls could **prevent 39 cases of police violence monthly**.

**Notwithstanding, we face three big risks.** First, *Not the Police* runs the risk of guiding people to an inappropriate service or to a non-police alternative when the situation calls for the police. To overcome this, our team has called and emailed services in our database to vet them and verify their information. Moreover, our platform has a built-in safety net to ensure that residents experiencing serious emergencies are immediately directed to 911. Our chatbot recognizes keywords such as “attack”, “bleed”, “chase”, etc., and auto-responds with a message that includes a button for the user to call 911 immediately.

Secondly, calling 911 is still instinctual for many Americans. As such, we will send biweekly push notifications to our subscribers to update them on new services and educate them on non-police alternatives. Additionally, we will partner with city services and grassroots organizations to launch digital and physical awareness campaigns. This combined strategy of direct and indirect campaigning will alter residents’ propensity to call 911. Lastly, *Not the Police* faces an adoption risk. Our platform needs to be well-known to be effective in redirecting calls. To this end, we have dedicated ~8% of our budgeted expenses to launching paid social media campaigns (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to acquire subscribers and keep *Not the Police* top-of-mind. Our partnerships with city services will also enable us to utilize their mass digital and physical distribution channels to market our platform across the entire city, eventually reaching the older demographic as well.

## Budget

*Not the Police’s* cost areas are broken down into supplies, travel and transportation, and personnel costs. Online crowdfunding is tentatively *Not the Police’s* primary source of revenue. Our team will run our initial pilot program with the City of Berkeley free of charge to garner credibility; we will scope out the opportunity to sell to city governments mid-pilot. We have a negative funding gap as a buffer for ad-hoc project expenses.

SECTION 1. PROJECTED EXPENSES		
I. Supplies Cost	Supplies Cost Details	Total
User testing/interview compensation	We will pay each interviewee \$25 for each 1-hour user test. We will conduct approximately 36 interviews throughout the year, totaling to \$900.	\$900.00
Video conferencing subscriptions	The free version of Zoom only allows meetings <45 min, so our team will require three Zoom premium subscriptions (\$150/yr) to hold longer meetings with partner services and team members.	\$450.00
Dispatcher/first responder interview compensation	We will compensate dispatchers/first responders for interviews regarding <i>Not the Police</i> . We plan to interview 10 individuals (\$30/hr) from various City of Berkeley services to iterate on <i>Not the Police</i> .	\$300.00
AI mobile app development	We are currently using a no-code platform to prototype. The subscription costs of \$100/month will transfer to mobile app development costs when we build our own NLP engine and technology stack.	\$1,200.00
Social media marketing	We will create ads on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram targeting younger progressives (i.e., individuals who follow activism pages) in Berkeley to increase reach/adoption. These ads would cost \$30/week; we'll run them for 30 weeks.	\$900.00
<b>Subtotal Supplies</b>		<b>\$ 3,750.00</b>
II. Travel & Transportation Costs	Travel Cost Details	Total
Travel between services/interviews	Team will travel around the Bay Area (\$100/month per person for 12 months) to meet with city services and conduct in-person interviews (when safe).	\$3,600.00
<b>Subtotal Travel</b>		<b>\$ 3,600.00</b>



III. Personnel Costs		Personnel Cost Details	Total
Part-time worker to verify information listed for services		Hiring a Community Management Intern will ensure that <i>Not the Police</i> 's service info is accurate and up-to-date. The intern will dedicate 5 hours/week over the course of 40 weeks. We will pay them \$20/hr.	\$4,000.00
Subtotal Personnel			\$ 4,000.00
TOTAL PROJECTED EXPENSES			\$ 11,350.00
SECTION 2. PROJECTED REVENUE			
Revenue and In-kind Contribution Sources	Revenue/ In-kind Contribution Details		Total
Expected revenue from government/subscriptions	The initial pilot program at UC Berkeley and in the City of Berkeley will be free.		\$0.00
Expected Big Ideas funding			\$10,000.00
Subtotal additional grant or prize money			\$ 10,000.00
Additional Grant or Prize Money	Additional Grant or Prize Money Details		Total
Projected donations	Our platform includes a donation link to <a href="https://www.buymeacoffee.com/notpolice">https://www.buymeacoffee.com/notpolice</a> . Each donation on the link defaults to \$5. Additionally, we plan to crowdfund \$2,000 from friends and family.		\$3,000.00
Subtotal additional grant or prize money			\$ 3,000.00
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE			\$ 13,000.00
SECTION 3. FUNDING GAP			
PROJECTED FUNDING GAP			\$ (1,650.00)

## Team Bios

### Claire Liu (Product Design/Marketing, User Research, Data Analytics)

Claire is a UC Berkeley senior studying IEOR and Business (MET). Her experience ranges from building social ventures in homeless outreach, to supporting health care startups, to honing product design and management skills in the software and banking industries. She focuses on centering the voice of the end user and other stakeholders, combining interview insights with existing data to make strategic product decisions. She has previously worked at Pivotal (VMware) and Bank of America, in product and experience design.

### Marcel Tan (Product Development, Go-to-Market, Policy)

Marcel is a senior at UC Berkeley studying Political Science and Business. At age 19, he oversaw the discipline, logistics, and training safety of 300 commissioned police officers-to-be, some of whom were 33 years older than him. Marcel was the first marketing employee at Pand.ai, an AI startup building chatbots for financial services. He later ventured into product management at Saleswhale (YC S16), where he co-owned their email AI's scheduling product and personally signed up 9 companies pre-launch. Marcel also cofounded Marq (SkyDeck HotDesk S20), a Q&A platform that rewards users with payouts for staking on constructive answers.

### Sohil Kshirsagar (Software Engineering, Product Development)

Sohil is a UC Berkeley alumnus with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. He is currently a software engineer at AspireIQ, the leading influencer marketing platform. In the past, Sohil has built a political news aggregator, *Purplesource.io*, that employed NLP techniques to match politically left-leaning and right-leaning news articles on the same current event. He also cofounded Marq with Marcel, writing most of the code for the platform and scaling it to securely handle hundreds of dollars in credit transactions.



# References

- [1] [2] [10] [Everyday Risk: Disparate Exposure and Racial Inequality in Police Violence](#)
- [3] [Berkeley PD - Calls for Service](#)
- [4] [Release #2020-15: Broad support for police reform and proposals aimed at reducing police violence, even as most are satisfied with their local police.](#)
- [5] [9-1-1 Statistics](#)
- [6] [UC Berkeley Quick Facts](#)
- [7] [Data USA: Oakland, CA](#)
- [8] [Data USA: San Francisco, CA](#)
- [9] [Volunteering in U.S. Hits Record High; Worth \\$167 Billion](#)

# Appendix

Appendix I: Letters of Support from Councilmember Rigel Robinson & Ari Neulight, Homeless Outreach Coordinator

**Attached on next two pages.**

## Appendix II: Product Demo to UC Berkeley's Mental Health Response Committee

### Google Drive link to video recording of demo

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/11HgXhAdBHKvfG8SZReJgNLFGqIKdO3Qo/view?usp=sharing>

\*\*\*DISCLAIMER\*\*\*

**Please do not share this video.** Keep viewership within the 2021 Big Ideas Judging Committee.  
Thank you!

## Appendix III: Services Currently Listed On Our Chatbot

City	Homeless Outreach	Mental Health Crisis	Medical Treatment
Berkeley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Berkeley's Mobile Crisis Team</li> <li>• Mr. Ari Neulight, LCSW, UC Berkeley Homeless Outreach Coordinator</li> <li>• City of Berkeley's Homeless Outreach and Treatment Team</li> <li>• Berkeley Mental Health Adult Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Berkeley's Mobile Crisis Team</li> <li>• City of Berkeley's Homeless Outreach and Treatment Team</li> <li>• Berkeley Mental Health Adult Services</li> <li>• Crisis Support Services of Alameda County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berkeley Free Clinic</li> <li>• City of Berkeley's Mobile Crisis Team</li> </ul>
Oakland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation Dignity</li> <li>• Covenant House California</li> <li>• Fred Finch Youth Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health First Oakland</li> <li>• North County Mobile Crisis Team</li> <li>• Fred Finch Youth Center</li> <li>• Crisis Support Services of Alameda County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation Dignity</li> <li>• Fred Finch Youth Center</li> </ul>
San Francisco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• San Francisco Mobile Crisis Team</li> <li>• San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team (SFHOT)</li> <li>• Bayview Hunters Point Foundation</li> <li>• Larkin Street Youth Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• San Francisco Mobile Crisis Team</li> <li>• San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team (SFHOT)</li> <li>• Bayview Hunters Point Foundation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• San Francisco Mobile Crisis Team</li> <li>• San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team (SFHOT)</li> <li>• Larkin Street Youth Services</li> </ul>