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Petition urges city leaders to fully fund Portland Street Response program

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~2 minutes

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Close to 7,000 people have signed the petition for Friends of Portland Street Response.

PORTLAND, Ore. ([KOIN](#)) — A groundswell of support is building to urge Portland city leaders to keep the city’s street response teams from shutting down and grow the program to operate 24/7.

Close to 7,000 people have signed the petition for [Friends of Portland Street Response](#), demanding the program, which has become a national model, become permanent and fully funded.

The Portland Street Response program started a few years ago. Their crisis teams, which feature a mental health worker and EMT, responded to more than 7,000 calls last year. In the past, most of those calls would have had armed police officers responding.

Commissioner Rene Gonzalez is in charge of the Portland Fire Bureau, and the street response program is under that bureau. Gonzalez said he would lift the hiring freeze and claimed that he is 100% committed to expanding the program to 24/7 as soon as possible, but would not say when that would happen.

“It’s a fantastic group. They are doing important things. They are

providing a non-police alternative for those suffering from mental distress on our streets,” said Gonzalez.

Petition backers tell KOIN 6 News that they want to see this happen sooner rather than later, along with dedicated funding.

Gonzalez said he is working on sustainable funding but is keeping an eye on making sure there are financial controls for the program.