

Sheppard Mullin Bolsters Fight to Mend DC Police’s Mental Health Response

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The National Law Journal spoke with pro bono partner Dan Brown about a lawsuit Sheppard Mullin, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the ACLU of D.C. filed in a Washington, D.C. federal court on behalf of community organization Bread for the City, challenging the District of Columbia’s practice of sending police, rather than mental health providers, to respond to mental health crises. The complaint alleges that the District’s response to mental health emergencies violates the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act.

The publication quotes Brown: "Experts agree that someone experiencing a mental health crisis must be able to call a mental health provider who can help. It’s now time for our communities to do the right thing for residents experiencing mental health crises, and we are proud to partner with the ACLU to advance this important cause."

Brown further said to the *NLJ* that the claims were new, but they were rooted in the success he’s had with previous lawsuits over equal access to public services for those protected by the ADA.

The *NLJ* wrote, "Brown is no stranger to ADA claims. Last year he helped several disability rights organizations sue New York City over its subway system’s unequal access. That suit ended with a settlement which will make the 95 percent of the city’s subway’s 364 currently inaccessible stations compliant by 2055."

Brown was joined in the new suit by Sheppard Mullin attorneys Steven Hollman, Nikole Snyder and Calla N. Simeone.

Brown added, "While it’s a novel claim, we believe it’s a solid claim," comparing it to the Subway accessibility fight. He said the new claims seek the same treatment for those facing mental health crises as those calling for help after breaking their leg: "people with disabilities are entitled to emergency services, just like they are entitled to transportation services," he said.

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Attorneys

Daniel L. Brown

Steven P. Hollman

Calla Simeone

Nikole Snyder

Practice Areas

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