

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 10-0217R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: President Young, Councilmembers Branch, Kraft, Henry, Middleton, Conaway,
Holton, Welch, Clarke, Reisinger, Curran, Stokes, Cole

Introduced and read first time: July 12, 2010

Assigned to: Public Safety Committee

Committee Report: Favorable

Adopted: December 9, 2010

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING

Investigative Hearing - Dismissal of Rape Cases

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2 FOR the purpose of directing representatives from the Baltimore City Police Department, the
3 Office of the State's Attorney for Baltimore City, and the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
4 to appear before the Council to explain the reasons why an abnormally high percentage of
5 rape complaints in Baltimore are dismissed as unfounded and to discuss what changes must
6 be made to ensure that rape allegations are investigated properly and respectfully.

Recitals

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8 A recent review of FBI crime statistics by the *Baltimore Sun* found that a troublingly high
9 percentage of reported rape cases in Baltimore are ultimately classified as unfounded by the
10 Baltimore Police Department. According to the *Sun* report, over the last 4 years more than 30%
11 of alleged rapes investigated by detectives each year have been deemed unfounded, five times
12 the national average. Worse, 40% of calls to police involving rape allegations were never even
13 referred to sex crimes detectives.

14 Both of these percentages are among the highest in the nation, and together they mean that
15 the majority of the time that the police are alerted to a possible rape the allegations are
16 eventually dismissed. A rape report in Baltimore is more likely to be dismissed as false or
17 baseless than in any other city in America.

18 Although each report to police is unique, and the judgements officers must make are often
19 complex and difficult, the extreme deviation from national averages found in the Baltimore
20 percentages raises serious concerns. Victim advocates who have reviewed the figures cited in
21 the *Sun's* report worry that investigative tactics used by the Baltimore City Police Department
22 may distort the extent of sexual violence in Baltimore by discourage assault victims from coming
23 forward or proceeding with a complaint. Past media reports of officers refusing to file rape
24 reports, and anecdotal accounts by some victims of egregiously callous police behavior, lend
25 credence to the fear that elements of the Police Department instinctively distrust victim accounts
26 of assaults and are disinclined to investigate rape claims.

27 Seen from this perspective, the extraordinarily large percentage of rape reports that are
28 dismissed without ever being referred to specially trained sex crimes detectives who are best able
29 to evaluate these claims is especially troubling. In order to address this issue and other serious

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken by amendment.

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1 concerns about the City’s rape investigation policies and procedures brought to light by the FBI
2 statistics it is vital that all aspects of these policies and procedures be fully, and publicly,
3 examined.

4 The internal audit and investigation initiated by the Mayor is an important first step in this
5 examination. However, in order to reassure all of Baltimore’s citizens about the willingness of
6 the Police Department to take their reports seriously, the issues raised by these numbers must be
7 discussed publically in a forum that allows concerns from every corner of the City to be
8 expressed. The Police Department, and the City, need to work hard to restore the public’s trust
9 that the claims of sexual assault victims will be taken seriously and dealt with respectfully. An
10 important way to begin to earn back this trust is to frankly discuss the reasons for the current
11 numbers and to clearly lay out what changes must be - and will be - made in order to ensure that
12 no sexual assault victims ever feel that they must suffer in silence because of a fear that they
13 would be belittled instead of believed if they were to come forward.

14 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That
15 representatives from the Baltimore City Police Department, the Office of the State’s Attorney for
16 Baltimore City, and the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice are directed to appear before the
17 Council to explain the reasons why an abnormally high percentage of rape complaints in
18 Baltimore are dismissed as unfounded and to discuss what changes must be made to ensure that
19 rape allegations are investigated properly and respectfully.

20 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
21 Police Commissioner, the Director of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, the State’s
22 Attorney for Baltimore City, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.