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	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201		
	Subject	Council Bill 15-0235R – Resolution – Trauma Counseling for Children Affected by Violence		

To: President and Members
of the City Council
c/o 409 City Hall

July 10, 2015

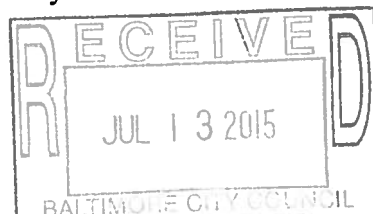
The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill 15-0235R – Resolution – Trauma Counseling for Children Affected by Violence. The purpose of this Resolution is to call on the Mayor and the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools to act to ensure that all children affected by the recent unrest have access to trauma counseling.

Unfortunately, the root causes of Baltimore’s recent unrest have plagued our city for decades and will not be resolved overnight. Many significant investments are necessary, including in schools, housing, and job opportunities. However, one of the most critical underlying problems is the unmet mental health needs of our youth. This core issue must be addressed for other reforms to be successful.

The majority of our residents have suffered from trauma, not only from the unrest but from decades of poverty, neglect, racism, and rampant disparities. Our youth are among the most at-risk population to be impacted by these factors – but they can also most directly benefit from mental health intervention. We must bridge the gap of the huge unmet need of mental health treatment in our youth.

Counseling for children in this heightened time of need is important and will help children to better cope with the issues they are facing. However, this must be beginning of our efforts to meet the mental health needs of our youth and not the end. The Health Department is working to develop a number of initiatives that will help address these unmet needs.

First, we are working with our federal partners and private entities to acquire funding to implement a robust telemedicine program within our schools. Through telemedicine, we can have healthcare providers—including mental health providers—accessible to every one of the 85,000 students across 189 schools. Physicians and nurse practitioners can provide urgent and primary care. Mental health providers can screen every child once a year, and provide ongoing support for each child in need for counseling, mental health, and other services. There are successful models of telemedicine in several parts of the country, including Howard County. Baltimore can be a model for primary care mental homes through telemedicine in public schools.



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Second, the Health Department is leading trainings with support from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for all front-line city workers on trauma-informed care and in mental health first aid. Trauma-Informed Care is an organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma in order to help survivors rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. This training will help ensure residents are treated with dignity and respect in difficult situations and lessen the health and social impacts of trauma. The Health Department began this initiative last week by training many of our own staff. Other city agencies scheduled to participate in future trainings including Housing, Recreation and Parks, and Baltimore City Police. For more information, please visit: <http://health.baltimorecity.gov/trauma-informed-care>

Third, we are working to secure funding to establish a 24/7 treatment center that specifically serves those with mental illness and addiction. This center would provide counseling and addiction treatment as well as connect people with housing and other needs. A “no wrong door” policy ensures that nobody is turned away, and that treatment is provided at the time of request. Patients can self-refer or be brought by families, police, or EMS. This service will create an alternative location to bring those suffering from mental illness other than the City Jail. For our youth, this would prevent them from entering the criminal justice system and link them to the care they need.

The Health Department commends the City Council and Baltimore City Public Schools for working to address the mental health needs of our youth. We encourage these efforts to continue and are working to expand mental health services in our City. We will be present at the hearing to answer any questions the Committee may have on this matter.

cc: Angela Gibson, Office of the Mayor
Shannon Mace, Director of Policy and Planning, Department of Health
Andrew Nicklas, Director of Legislative Affairs, Department of Health