



CITY OF BALTIMORE  
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

<b>TO</b>	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
<b>FROM</b>	Amber Greene, Chief Equity Officer Director, Office of Equity & Civil Rights
<b>CC</b>	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
<b>ANALYST</b>	Zachary Wellman, Equity Policy Analyst
<b>DATE</b>	February 24, 2026
<b>SUBJECT</b>	OECR Report on Baltimore City Council Bill 25-0119 Footways – Sidewalks – Accessibility

**POSITION: Favorable**

**BILL SYNOPSIS**

The Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) has reviewed and is herein reporting on City Council Bill 25-0119 – *Footways – Sidewalks – Accessibility*.

This is an ordinance that accomplishes the following:

- Define certain terms related to accessible sidewalks.
- Establish sidewalk accessibility standards.
- Obligate real property owners to construct, maintain, and repair accessible sidewalks.
- Increase the minimum permitted sidewalk width.
- Establish that real property owners are responsible for the inspection and repair of sidewalks and curb ramps when selling, applying for a permit for construction, or becoming aware of unsafe sidewalk conditions.
- Provide the Director of Transportation with the authority to require repair or replacement of a sidewalk by a real property owner.
- Upon an event trigger, provide for inspection and issuance of a compliance certificate of footway accessibility, subject to reinspection.
- Amend fines for noncompliance from \$10 to \$100 per day.
- Provide for an effective date.

The ordinance accomplishes this by adding Sections 2-103 (IBC § 105.1.6) and 7-102 (IPMC §§ 304.22.1 and 304.22.2) to Article - Building, Fire, and Related Codes and Section 9-4 to Article 26 - Surveys, Streets, and Highways of the Baltimore City Code. It also does this by repealing and re-ordaining, with amendments, Section 40-14(e)(4b) of Article 1 Sections 9-1, 9-2(a) and (c), and 10-1 of Article 26 - Surveys, Streets, and Highways of the Baltimore City Code.

## **SUMMARY OF POSITION**

City Council Bill 25-0119 seeks to entrust property owners with the responsibility to maintain accessible and safe footways connected to or adjacent to their property. The intention is to ensure that sidewalks and curb cuts on private property throughout the City allow residents with mobility-based disabilities to traverse the City. The City committed to proposing this bill as a part of its settlement in the federal ADA class action lawsuit lodged against it, *Goodlaxson, et al. v. Mayor and City Council of Baltimore*.

By vesting responsibility for maintaining, inspecting, and repairing footway accessibility with relevant property owners when transferring ownership, obtaining construction permits, or being notified, the legislation reduces the likelihood that footways adjoining private property will fall into disrepair, become unsafe, or become inaccessible. These event triggers will then require the property owner to submit a completed passing inspection to the Department of Transportation to obtain a compliance certificate of footway accessibility, subject to random reinspection. This provision of the legislation should ensure continued compliance and upkeep of public footways, so they do not become inaccessible again, by granting the Director of Transportation the authority to enforce compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the Baltimore City Code.

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires local governments to ensure accessible pedestrian routes and curb ramps at intersections, especially when streets or walkways are newly constructed or altered. To this extent, Federal guidance has recognized the authority for municipalities to establish and enforce property-owner maintenance ordinances as a mechanism for compliance with Title II of the ADA, while the city retains ultimate responsibility for program accessibility.

## **EQUITY ASSESSMENT**

People living with disabilities are among the most unrecognized, marginalized, and underserved identities; the obstacles to their full access and inclusion in society are often overlooked or unaddressed until inaccessibility results in harmful repercussions to their individual health, well-being, or needs. To this extent, their accommodation needs are often unaddressed until legal action is taken, forcing legal recognition of their exclusion and accommodation to rectify it; such was the case in *Goodlaxson, et al. v. Mayor and City Council of Baltimore*. This need to fight for inclusion and recognition comes at the detriment of individuals with disabilities' time, finances, and emotional well-being. City Council Bill 25-0119 should, in theory, preemptively mitigate some of these harmful effects resulting from inaccessible or non-existent footways throughout Baltimore. This should not only improve the equity and safety of residents living with disabilities, but also that of younger residents, older residents, residents with injuries, pregnant persons, families, couriers, and residents of generally disinvested communities that fall into disrepair.

Beyond ADA compliance, sidewalk and curb-ramp conditions are a public safety issue. Barriers such as missing curb ramps, narrow or broken sidewalks, and obstructions can force pedestrians—especially wheelchair users, seniors, and parents with strollers—into the roadway or unsafe crossings. Strengthening the upkeep and timely repairs of Baltimore's footways

reduces preventable hazards and supports safer, more predictable pedestrian travel for all. This is consistent with the ‘curb-cut effect,’ the finding that accessibility features intentionally geared towards serving people with disabilities often result in more equitable outcomes for broader, non-disabled populations.<sup>i</sup>

## FISCAL IMPACT

City Council Bill 25-0119 may result in an influx of complaint correspondence to the Mayor’s Commission on Disabilities from Baltimore City residents related to sidewalk inaccessibility concerns. However, this legislation is not expected to have any direct operational, investigatory, or enforcement outcomes that involve the OECR. While the Department of Transportation will maintain operational, investigatory, and/or enforcement responsibilities, OECR, under its equity mandate, would continue to track ADA-related complaints and data. As such, OECR may have minimal to moderate fiscal impacts on the office associated with the legislation.

## CONCLUSION

City Council Bill 25-0119 intends to make sidewalks and curb cuts throughout the City more accessible and reliable while also preventing the City’s accessibility features from falling into permanent states of disrepair. The OECR discerns no inequity in the bill's intent, purpose, or impact; rather, the legislation is likely to have affirmative impacts on the equity of residents living with mobility disabilities and their families. As such, the Office of Equity and Civil Rights respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on City Council Bill 25-0119.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Amber Greene  
Director, Office of Equity & Civil Rights

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<sup>i</sup> *Apodaca Schlossberg, J. (2021, November 17). How the curb-cut effect boosts equity for everyone. UCLA Health. <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/how-the-curb-cut-effect-boosts-equity-for-everyone>*