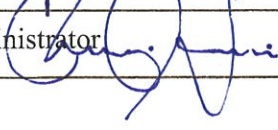



FROM	NAME & TITLE	Christopher Shorter, City Administrator 	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Office of the Mayor 100 N. Holliday Street, Room Baltimore, MD 21202		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill # 21-0030 Coordinated Multi-Agency Code Inspections		

TO The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council c/o
Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

DATE: March 2, 2021

Position: Support with Amendments

The City Administrators Office (CAO) herein reporting on City Council Bill 21-0030, Coordinated Multi-Agency Code Inspections, the purpose of which is to require the City Administrator to coordinate multiple agencies conducting a comprehensive code inspection on commercial properties that received certain environmental citations.

Background

The bill also requires the City Administrator and the Department of Housing and Community Development to receive a copy of all environmental citations that were issued. It specifies that the multi-agency team must include the Fire Department, the Department of Health, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Department of Public Works, and each agency shall inspect the cited premises to ensure compliance administered by that agency. Further, the bill requires that the City Administrator provide certain information to councilmembers; requires that the City Administrator submit an annual report detailing the work of the multi-agency inspection team; and provides a special effective date of July 1, 2021.

Other Considerations:

The CAO is concerned with the increase in the number of additional inspections this legislation would mandate and the subsequent fiscal and workforce impacts. The current legislation would trigger over 800 additional inspections by multiple agencies. These additional inspections would necessitate additional inspectors, during an austere fiscal environment. There are also ongoing concerns about maintaining adequate staffing for Housing Code Inspectors and Investigators which this legislation would further jeopardize.

In addition, we are also concerned that the Department of Public Works and the Environmental Control Board are written into the bill. Neither agency is an enforcement agency, and these changes would require the broadening of the scope of work for each respective agency.

The City Administrator's Office is actively working on establishing policies, reviewing existing procedures, and onboarding staff. While the CAO is committed to coordinating effective service delivery and ensuring inspections for nuisance businesses and other violations are conducted thoroughly in order to protect the public health and safety, it does not feel comfortable taking responsibility for this large a shift in process, at this early stage.

Conclusions:

The Office of the City Administrator has reviewed City Council Bill 21-0030 calling for coordinated multi-agency code inspections and supports its implementation with amendments. We request that the Office of City Administrator be stricken from the bill. Also, the Environmental Control Board acts as a judicial body for inspections, and not as an enforcement arm of the City. Finally, we request that the threshold be significantly raised to reduce the number of additional inspections this legislation would trigger.