

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

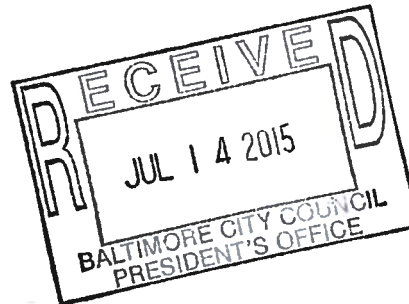
Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Marnell A. Cooper
Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners

Gregory E. Thornton, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

July 14, 2015

The Honorable Bernard C. "Jack" Young
President, Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202



Re: Position Statement
City Council Resolution 15-0235R

Dear Council President Young:

On June 1, 2015 the Baltimore City Council introduced the above-captioned bill (Resolution), concerning Trauma Counseling for Children Affected by Violence, and requesting a description of steps to be taken by Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) to ensure that all of Baltimore's children who were affected by the recent violence have access to trauma counseling. City Schools strongly supports this resolution. This letter will summarize the array of services that were provided to students in the days and weeks following the events of April 2015, as well as the district's plan for continued supports to be offered during the 2015-2016 school year.

During the days immediately following the unrest, a collaborative effort was instituted in which licensed social workers, certified school psychologists, guidance counselors and clinicians from City Schools were dispatched to ensure mental health coverage at all schools. Through individual, small group and classroom interventions, students were afforded the opportunity to discuss events and express their feelings in a safe, therapeutic environment. Feedback was gathered on a daily basis so that administrators could assess student needs, monitor interventions and plan accordingly.

Teachers were provided materials to support instructional needs of students. Sample lessons and activities were created and distributed to promote student learning and facilitate discussions around social justice issues. Tip sheets for administrators and teachers were also provided, as well as a reading list and resource list which were posted on the district website. Opportunities were also afforded to administrators, teachers and other staff to meet individually and in groups to debrief and share coping strategies.

Moving forward, school-based clinicians will continue to be available to provide trauma counseling, and mental health supports to students. Plans include the following:

- All groups of clinicians, including social workers, school psychologists and guidance counselors, will be offered crisis intervention training.

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- Professional development training will be planned for social workers and school psychologists. In addition, clinical supervisors and a multi-disciplinary Special Response Crisis Team will update clinicians on the protocol for crisis intervention and best practice clinical interventions for trauma-informed care.
- Social workers will conduct a needs assessment in each school to identify those students and classrooms where additional supports are needed.
- Collaborative learning opportunities are anticipated to take place with national organizations to better support effective implementation of best practices and policies around school mental health.
- Clinicians are prepared to assist families with referral information to ensure that community resources are accessible to support positive family engagement, violence prevention, and mental health wellness.

In summary, City Schools will continue to work together with community partners to meet the challenge of addressing all students' mental health needs, particularly around trauma resulting from community violence. We will be pleased to testify regarding the steps being taken to help provide our children with the conflict resolution skills they will need to succeed in life.

Thank you for inviting City Schools to participate in this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Thornton".

Gregory E. Thornton, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer