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	Subject: Position:	CC #18-0107R FAVORABLE		

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

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The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review #18-0107R, entitled, "Investigative Hearing – Arson and Fire Fatality Awareness: Community Risk Reduction Program." This resolution calls on various City agencies to appear before the City Council to discuss arsons, fire fatalities and injuries, and school fires, along with what steps the City can take to reduce the risk of these incidents occurring.

Council Bill #18-0107R will initiate a necessary conversation between City agencies and the City Council in regards to fire safety issues. Fire safety has become a national concern, leading many cities to search for new strategies to prevent and reduce the risk of fires. By the end of 2017, public fire departments responded to 1,319,500 fires. Every 88 seconds, fire departments respond to a home fire. This is especially concerning because, in 2017, 77% of all fire deaths occurred in the home. Home fires were also responsible for 72% of all civilian related injuries.¹

The City of Baltimore has also been affected significantly by fires and related injuries. Baltimore City had 30 fire fatalities by the end of 2017. It is the highest number of fire related deaths since 2007, which ended with 33 fatalities. The 30 deaths occurred in 19 fires and in only six of those reported fires were there working smoke alarms.² For 2017, these deaths accounted for 42% of all fire fatalities in the state of Maryland.³

Within the last decade, the City has had over 2,200 cases of arson, 150 fire fatalities, and 200 school fires. Furthermore, each year, fire fatalities have spiked between the months of October and February. Within this period, 18 lives were lost in 2016-17, and 11 in 2017-2018.⁴

¹ "Fire Loss in the United States." *NFPA Report - Fire Loss in the United States*, www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Data-research-and-tools/US-Fire-Problem/Fire-loss-in-the-United-States.

² "Fire Deaths in Maryland." *Maryland State Police, Maryland State Fire Marshall*, 2018, mdsp.maryland.gov/firemarshal/Documents/Fire%20Deaths%20-%202017.pdf.

³ "Home Fire Fatalities in the News." *U.S. Fire Administration, FEMA*, apps.usfa.fema.gov/civilian-fatalities/incident/reportMap.

⁴ "Fire Deaths in Maryland." *Maryland State Police, Maryland State Fire Marshall*, 2018, mdsp.maryland.gov/firemarshal/Documents/Fire%20Deaths%20-%202017.pdf.

Other cities facing similar issues have taken proactive measures to address fire safety. After a surge of fire incidents which led to 15 casualties in the span of a month, the New York City Council, in coordination with the New York Fire Department (FDNY), passed a fire safety bill in May of 2018. The bill requires FDNY to conduct outreach and provide education to businesses and residents. It also sets new guidelines for smoke detectors, exit and fire escape signs on properties, and also mandates individualized emergency escape plans for persons with special needs.⁵

Overall, BCHD believes that Council Bill #18-0107R is an essential step towards creating a comprehensive plan to increase fire prevention awareness and a structured community risk reduction program. For the forgoing reasons, the Baltimore City Health Department urges a **favorable report** on Council Bill #18-0107R.

⁵ Dastvar, Farzad. "New Fire Safety Bills Passed by the NYC Council in May 2018: A Brief Overview." *MEP Engineering & Design Consulting Firm*, www.ny-engineers.com/blog/new-fire-safety-bills-passed-in-may-2018.