

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 07-0315R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: President Rawlings-Blake, Councilmembers Clarke, Mitchell, Kraft, Welch,
Middleton, Young, D'Adamo, Crider, Reisinger

Introduced and read first time: July 16, 2007

Assigned to: Education Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners,
Baltimore City Public School System

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Investigative Hearing – Baltimore City Public School System Suspension Policies**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting the CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System to discuss
4 current policies governing in- and out- of school suspension; to provide information on
5 specific behaviors that result in suspension and the period of time students are suspended for
6 each infraction; to address systemwide consistency in suspension policy; and to share the
7 Department's plan to develop an alternative to out-of-school suspension that insures that
8 public school students remain in a learning environment when subject to disciplinary action.

9 **Recitals**

10 In 2006, the City Council adopted 2 Resolutions examining reports on the dismal graduation
11 rates in Baltimore City Public Schools. The first examined a report from the Manhattan
12 Institute, Leaving Boys Behind: Public High School Graduation Rates, that found in 2003,
13 Baltimore ranked 91st of the 100 largest school districts in the country, with an overall
14 graduation rate of 48%, in 2003. The second discussed a report of the Education Research
15 Center, Diplomas Count: An Essential Guide to Graduation Policy and Rates, that found in the
16 same year that Baltimore City's high schools had the 2nd worst graduation rate among the
17 nation's 50 largest school systems.

18 The following year, in a continuing effort to address the symbiotic problems of high rates of
19 truancy and low graduation rates of students in the Baltimore City public schools, the City
20 Council held informational hearings on the Baltimore Truancy Assessment Center. The B-TAC
21 Truancy Assessment Center activity report for that time period just prior to the Council hearing
22 on the first resolution was as follows:

- 23 • 9/25 - 10/31/06 – 892 apprehended, 124 enrolled in the Truancy Program
24 • 11/1 - 11/30/06 – 876 apprehended, 109 enrolled in the Truancy Program
25 • 12/1 - 12/31/06 – 836 apprehended, 111 enrolled in the Truancy Program
26 • 1/01 - 01/31/07 – 1097 apprehended, 68 enrolled in the Truancy Program.

27 Information provided at a second hearing to investigate the possibility of developing a
28 Westside Truancy Assessment Center brought to light the disheartening information that as of
29 February 2007, 11,392 students, including 16 year olds who can legally withdraw, missed 20 or

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

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1 more days of school, and 5,000 of them were under the age of 16. By March 2007, 11,980
2 students missed 20 or more days. As of March 2, 2007, the total number of days a systemwide
3 student body of 80,912 reported absent was an alarming 848,467.

4 The problems of truancy and low rates of graduation are compounded or contributed to by
5 the large number of out-of-school suspensions. The December 2006 report of the *Task Force on*
6 *the Education of Maryland's African-American Males*, convened by the Maryland K-16
7 Leadership Council, states that: "There's considerable evidence that a history of school
8 suspension does one of two things – either it puts a child on the path toward delinquency or
9 accelerates his journey there. Suspension, then, is not only an ineffective deterrent for
10 misbehavior, it's– at best – an accelerant and – at worst – a catalyst for it".

11 A recent article in *Education Week* erroneously stated that suspension rates in Baltimore's
12 public schools peaked at more than 14,200 students (not counting those who were suspended
13 more than once) or 16.1% of the 88,000 children enrolled during the 2003-2004 school year.
14 Unfortunately, the Maryland Department of Education's own figures for the number of
15 suspension incidents by schools in Baltimore City show 26,324 suspensions in 2003-04; 16,642
16 in 2004-05; and 15,031 in 2005-06.

17 In a laudable attempt to stem the tide of academic failure and address systemic problems, the
18 proposed budget introduced by the interim-CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System for
19 2007-2008 outlined a number of new initiatives, including hiring more staff members to monitor
20 truancy and expanding in-school suspension programs. We owe it to our children to make sure
21 these attempts do not fall short. Knowing the extent of the problem does no good if we do not
22 make sure the remedies are just as far reaching.

23 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the CEO
24 of the Baltimore City Public School System is invited to discuss current policies governing in-
25 and out- of school suspension; to provide information on specific behaviors that result in
26 suspension and the period of time students are suspended for each infraction; to address
27 systemwide consistency in suspension policy; and to share the Department's plan to develop an
28 alternative to out-of-school suspension that insures public school students remain in a learning
29 environment when subject to disciplinary action.

30 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
31 CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System, the Secretary of the Maryland State
32 Department of Education, the President, Baltimore City Council of Parent Teacher Associations,
33 and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.