

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 07-0327R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Young, Holton, Middleton, Spector

Introduced and read first time: September 17, 2007

Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Health Department, Police Department,  
Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Is the Legalization of Drugs an Answer for Baltimore City?**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting representatives of the Baltimore City Health Department the  
4 Baltimore City Police Department, the Executive Director of LEAP (Law Enforcement  
5 Against Prohibition), and the Dean of the Howard University School of Law, to brief the  
6 council about the effects of the “War on Drugs” and discuss alternatives to our current drug  
7 policies; to encourage an open dialogue on the effectiveness of the imprisoning non-violent  
8 drug offenders; and examining the potential for treatment centers where care is available on  
9 demand and where drugs can be provided legally by medical professionals.

10 **Recitals**

11 After nearly four decades of fueling the U.S. “War on Drugs” with more than a trillion tax  
12 dollars and increasingly punitive policies, our confined population has quadrupled over a 20-year  
13 period, making the building of prisons one of this nation's fastest growing industries. More than  
14 2.2 million of our citizens are currently incarcerated. In the last five years we have arrested 9  
15 million people for nonviolent drug offenses--far more per capita than any country in the world.  
16 The United States has 4.6% of the world’s population but 22.5% of the world's prisoners.

17 Every year that we continue this war will cost the United States another 69 billion dollars.  
18 Despite all the lives destroyed and all the money so ill spent, illicit drugs are cheaper, more  
19 potent, and much easier to get than they were 36 years ago. Meanwhile, people continue dying  
20 in our streets, while drug barons and terrorists continue to grow richer than ever before.

21 The policies of prohibition of are often seen as the reasons for drug-related crimes. First,  
22 drug laws greatly increase the price of illegal drugs, often forcing users to steal or commit other  
23 crimes in order to obtain the means to supply their habit. Although it is difficult to estimate, the  
24 black market prices of heroin and cocaine appear to be almost 100 times greater than their  
25 pharmaceutical prices. Because there is no quality control in the black market, prohibition also  
26 kills by making drug use more dangerous. Illegal drugs contain poisons, are of uncertain  
27 potency, and are often injected with dirty needles. Many deaths are caused by infections,  
28 accidental overdoses, and poisoning.

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

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1 Many people will die of AIDS each year from using unsterilized needles. These casualties  
2 include the sexual partners and children of intravenous drug users. Drug-related AIDS is almost  
3 exclusively the result of drug prohibition. Users inject drugs rather than taking them in tablet  
4 form because tablets are expensive; they go to "shooting galleries" to avoid arrests for possessing  
5 drugs and needles; and they share needles because needles are illegal and, therefore, difficult to  
6 obtain. Legalization would help fight AIDS. First, clean needles would be made readily  
7 available, drugs in tablet form would be far less expensive, and needle sharing could be kept to a  
8 minimum.

9 Prohibition also stimulates crime by criminalizing users of illegal drugs, thereby creating  
10 disrespect for the law; forcing users into daily contact with professional criminals, which often  
11 leads to arrest and prison records that make legitimate employment difficult to obtain;  
12 encouraging young people to become criminals by creating an extremely lucrative black market;  
13 destroying, through drug crime, the economic viability of low-income neighborhoods, leaving  
14 young people fewer alternatives to working in the black market; and removing the settling of  
15 drug related disputes from the legal process, thereby creating a context of violence for the buying  
16 and selling of drugs.

17 Prohibition has an obvious negative impact on the economic viability of inner cities and their  
18 inhabitants. Prohibition-related violence and property crime raise costs, make loans and  
19 insurance difficult or impossible to secure, and make it difficult to attract skilled workers.  
20 Prohibition lures some workers away from legitimate businesses and into the black market, where  
21 "salaries" are much higher. As long as a black market in illegal drugs thrives in the inner cities, it  
22 is difficult to see how they can ever become economically viable.

23 For all these reasons, there needs to be an open dialogue regarding the drug policies in our  
24 great city and our great nation. While it is obvious to some that drug prohibition has done more  
25 harm than good, and that current drug policies and drug wars are simply failing policies, the  
26 discussion of legalization is often considered taboo. With so many young people being gunned  
27 down on our streets every day, the need for the discussion is more real now than it has ever been.  
28 With an open forum for discussion, we can propose positive laws that can help make our city and  
29 our nation a safer and more healthy place for our youth to grow and make positive changes to the  
30 society in which they are a part.

31 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That this body  
32 requests that representatives of the Baltimore City Health Department and the Baltimore City  
33 Police Department brief the council about the effects of the War on Drugs and discuss alternatives  
34 to our current drug policies; to encourage an open dialogue on the effectiveness of imprisoning of  
35 non-violent drug offenders; and examining the potential for treatment centers where care is  
36 available on demand and where drugs can be provided legally by medical professionals.

37 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
38 Baltimore City Police Commissioner, the Director of the Baltimore City Health Department, the  
39 Executive Director of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP), the Dean of the Howard  
40 University School of Law, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.