


F R O M	NAME & TITLE	Jerriane Anthony, Director	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Mayor's Office of Homeless Services 7 E. Redwood Street, 5 th Floor		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill #19-0410		

August 26, 2019

The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
Attn: Executive Secretary
Room 409, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD, 21202

Re: City Council Bill #19-0410 – The Baltimore City Trauma-Responsive Care Act

Dear President and City Council Members:

The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) has reviewed City Council Bill 10-0410. The bill establishes the Trauma-Informed Care Task Force, requires certain agencies to designate individuals to undergo formal training and to perform certain duties to ensure trauma-informed service delivery, requires certain agencies to submit periodic progress reports to the Task Force, requires the Task Force to submit an annual report to the Mayor and City Council, and reconstitutes the Office of Children, Youth, and Families to be the Office of Children and Family Success and designates that Office to lead a citywide initiative to prioritize trauma-responsive and trauma-informed services.

MOHS is tasked with leading community efforts to address homelessness in Baltimore City, through the development of a comprehensive crisis response system that ensures that homelessness is prevented, and when homelessness cannot be prevented, it should be a rare, brief, and nonrecurring experience. The work of MOHS is based on the value that every resident of Baltimore City deserves equitable access to safe, affordable, and quality housing opportunities. Our work is conducted with the understanding that trauma is often a contributing factor to homelessness, and that homelessness itself is an inherently traumatic experience.

In June 2019, the Baltimore City Continuum of Care (CoC) adopted a three-year Action Plan on Homelessness that sets clear, measurable, and achievable goals with specific strategies for policy and programmatic reform, effective analysis of need and performance, and a committed effort to realign resources to produce measurable outcomes on homelessness. In collaboration, MOHS and the CoC will work to execute five essential strategies: 1) increasing the supply of affordable housing, 2) creating a more effective homeless response system, 3) transforming the shelter

system, 4) improving access to employment and economic opportunities, and 5) establishing a race equity agenda.

The Action Plan includes numerous interventions aimed at addressing trauma and increasing safety for individuals and families, including:

- The value that “safe, affordable housing is the solution to homelessness” and permanent housing opportunities must be decent, safe, and affordable;
- A coordinated homeless response system that reduces trauma and increases safety via a clearly communicated and accessible shelter access plan;
- Coordinated access to housing and services for survivors of domestic violence;
- Clear roles for safe havens and other forms of bridge housing intended to mitigate risks of street homelessness, as well as trauma-informed street outreach services;
- Shelter transformation that will create safe and trauma-informed physical environments, as well as trauma-responsive service delivery models and case management capacity;
- Comprehensive training and technical assistance plans to ensure effective and consistent implementation of standards of care across the homeless service system, inclusive of trauma-informed service delivery; and
- The establishment of a race equity agenda that will inform all aspects of the plan and its interventions.

In addition to the local Action Plan on Homelessness, MOHS implements efforts in alignment with *Home Together: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. While the federal plan aims to end homelessness for all individuals, it articulates specific goals to end homelessness for unaccompanied youth and families with children, and includes an emphasis on trauma-informed approaches and the role of collaboration across agencies and funding streams. MOHS provides funding, technical assistance, and strategic guidance to connect children, youth, and families to eviction prevention, street outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing programs.

MOHS also leads community-wide efforts to address youth homelessness, including support for the Baltimore City CoC Youth Advisory Board. People with lived experience of homelessness are critical to every aspect of the planning, decision-making, and activities within our system. Based on their lived experiences of youth homelessness, the Youth Advisory Board is responsible for providing expertise and recommendations to the CoC and MOHS to improve the quality and effectiveness of the homeless service system. MOHS recommends that the Task Force partner and consult with the Youth Action Board, as they can provide valuable expertise on the intersection of trauma and homelessness.

Additionally, MOHS acts as the local implementing entity for the Youth REACH MD project in Baltimore City, a statewide effort to understand the number, characteristics, and needs of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness and housing instability. Our efforts to address the needs of young people experiencing homelessness in a trauma-informed, equitable, and effective manner requires youth participation and cross-sector collaboration.

To that end, MOHS commends City leadership for promoting trauma-informed and trauma-responsive services and supports City Council Bill 19-0410 with the following amendments,

1. Recommended change in §22-18 (B) to allow for compensation of task force members who are youth representatives not otherwise compensated for their contributed time and expertise. Service without compensation inequitably impacts people experiencing trauma, housing or economic instability, and other barriers to participation.
2. Recommended change in §22-21 (A) (2) to strike the Mayor's Office of Human Services.

Sincerely,

Jerrienne Anthony, Director
Mayor's Office of Human Services, Homeless Services Program