

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 09-0165R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Middleton, Henry, Cole, Young, Holton, D’Adamo, Clarke,
Welch, Reisinger, Spector, Kraft, Branch, Conaway

Introduced and read first time: October 19, 2009

Assigned to: Public Safety and Health Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Health Department, Baltimore City Public School
System, Commission on Aging and Retirement Education

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Flu Vaccines – Outreach to African Americans and Hispanics**

3 FOR the purpose of urging the Baltimore Health Commissioner to initiate a campaign, in concert
4 with area healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, Baltimore City Public Schools, and
5 senior care-givers, to inform African Americans and Hispanics of the disproportionate
6 dangers of the flu pandemic to their communities and to encourage African Americans and
7 Hispanics to get vaccinated against both the seasonal and H1N1 (swine) flu.

8 **Recitals**

9 On September 29, 2009, a 14-year-old African American girl became the State’s first young
10 casualty, with no underlying health problems to cause death from swine flu. The Department of
11 Health and Mental Hygiene Maryland Flu Watch reports that as of October 6, hers was the ninth
12 death from swine flu. There have also been 217 reported influenza hospitalizations from swine
13 flu alone. Predominant influenza strain information shows that type A (H1N1) or swine flu
14 continues to be the predominant strain of influenza in Maryland.

15 Black America Web’s *Weekly Insider*, October 8, 2009, edition sounded the alarm that
16 “Swine flu’s bigger impact on blacks and Hispanics in not being addressed”. The report stated
17 that an analysis of the first H1N1-related deaths among U.S. children revealed that half of those
18 deaths between April and August were among African-Americans and Hispanics – considerably
19 more than the percentage of both groups in the population.

20 The report goes on to charge that while the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) briefly
21 alluded to the problem in a September 4 report, the disproportionate effect on minority
22 populations has been documented by local health departments across the country:

- 23 • Boston’s Public Health Commission found that 37% of all swine flu cases in that city
24 occurred among blacks, with the black population being only 25% of the general
25 population. Likewise, Hispanics comprise 14% of Boston residents but 1/3rd of all
26 confirmed swine flu cases. 3 out of every 4 people hospitalized for the virus in
27 Boston have been black or Hispanic.

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

Council Bill 09-0165R

- 1 • Chicago’s Department of Public Health studied 1,500 lab-confirmed swine flu cases
2 between April and late July and found blacks and Hispanics were 4 times more likely
3 to be hospitalized than whites.
- 4 • Oklahoma’s Department of Public Health reported in late September that African-
5 American children in the state were being hospitalized for swine flu at 3 times the
6 rate of white children and 2 times the rate of Native American children.

7 The local health officials who conducted the studies found that while the disparity in the
8 prevalence of swine flu may appear to be based on ethnicity, it is more likely the result of
9 disparities in health conditions among population groups. The kinds of conditions that can lead
10 to more severe reactions to the virus are more prevalent among African and Hispanics – obesity,
11 asthma, and diabetes. Moreover, low income families in urban areas are less likely to have
12 health insurance and more likely to delay seeking treatment until an emergency room visit is
13 necessary.

14 Although federal health officials have yet to acknowledge the disparity rate of minorities
15 contracting the flu, the Director of the Centers for Disease Control’s National Center for
16 Immunization and Respiratory Diseases acknowledges there is a need to improve outreach to
17 African Americans to ensure that they get vaccinated for both the seasonal and the H1N1 flu
18 viruses . “About 100 million people, or 1 in 3 get vaccinated”, according to the Director of the
19 National Center. “We see lower rates among African -Americans. In adults under the age of 65,
20 there is a 12 percentage point difference. Among black adults at high-risk for exposure to the
21 flu, only one in four is getting vaccinated.”

22 A study, based on estimates from a computer model developed by the CDC, shows the strain
23 hospitals and health departments could face as a second wave of the swine flu surges. Fifteen
24 states could run out of hospital beds, and 12 more could fill 75% of their beds with swine flu
25 sufferers if 35% of Americans catch the virus in the coming weeks as expected.

26 According to 2008 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, blacks make up 63.6%, and Hispanics
27 and Latinos make up 2.7% of Baltimore City’s population. Vaccination against both strains of
28 the flu will not only provide protection for these valued family, friends, neighbors, schoolmates
29 and professional colleagues, it will help to ensure the healthy survival of our entire City.

30 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
31 Baltimore Health Commissioner is urged to initiate a campaign, in concert with area healthcare
32 providers, faith-based organizations, Baltimore City Public Schools, and senior care-givers, to
33 inform African Americans and Hispanics of the disproportionate dangers of the flu pandemic to
34 their communities and to encourage African Americans and Hispanics to get vaccinated against
35 both the seasonal and H1N1 (swine) flu.

36 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
37 Baltimore Health Commissioner, the President of the Baltimore Branch of the NAACP, and the
38 Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.