


F R O M	Name & Title	Dr. Leana Wen, Commissioner <i>Leana Wen</i>	Health Department AGENCY REPORT	
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201		
	Subject	18-0223 – Equity Assessment Program		

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

June 11, 2018

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #18-0223 – Equity Assessment Program. The purpose of this legislation is to develop an Equity Assessment Program for Baltimore City, to be developed and overseen by the Department of Planning; requiring City agencies to assess existing and proposed policies and practices for disparate outcomes based on race, gender, or income and to proactively develop policies, practices, and investments to prevent and redress those disparate outcomes; defining certain terms; providing for the adoption of rules and regulations to carry out this Program; requiring certain notices and reports; and generally relating to the goal of eliminating structural and institutional racism and other forms of discrimination based on immutable characteristics.

BCHD wholeheartedly supports the goal of this legislation. Our newly released white paper emphasizes that, “the mission of BCHD is to protect health, *eliminate disparities*, and ensure the well-being of every resident of Baltimore through education, advocacy, and direct service delivery.”¹ Under *Healthy Baltimore 2020*, BCHD’s strategic blueprint for health in the City, we again note that, “every aspect of the work we do at BCHD is rooted in combating health inequity and ensuring that all residents of our city have the right to a healthy, robust life. We commit to applying this lens to our own actions as public health workers and will not shy away from difficult conversations that may arise.”²

Several of our programs align closely with the stated purpose of Council Bill #18-0223. Our teen pregnancy prevention initiative seeks to inform, counsel, and provide resources to young women whose lives are disproportionately affected, both economically and socially, by unintended pregnancies.³ B’more for Healthy Babies assists new mothers, infants, and young children throughout the City with a number of interventions, including the distribution of cribs, intended to ensure their well-being.⁴ BCHD also provides trauma-informed care training for its partners and the City’s employees because of the disproportionate amount of trauma-afflicted residents in the City – most of whom are minorities.⁵

¹ Baltimore City Health Department, *White Paper: State of Health in Baltimore* (2018) <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/BCHD%20White%20Paper%20May%202018.pdf>

² *Ibid*, 5.

³ Baltimore City Health Department, Teen Pregnancy Prevention, <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/node/170>

⁴ B’more for Healthy Babies, <http://www.healthybabiesbaltimore.com/>

⁵ Baltimore City Health Department, Trauma-Informed Care, <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/trauma-informed-care>

Additionally, Baltimarket provides healthy food options to the City's poorer senior community at nearby locations.⁶

While BCHD supports many of the provisions included in the bill, there are a handful of issues that may need to be addressed. This includes whether the requirement of an "equity coordinator" is an unfunded mandate for a new position, or can agencies have current staff assume this role. There is also some ambiguity regarding what constitutes an equity assessment. With an agency as varied in its programming and as stressed in its resources as BCHD, it may be very difficult for program staff to accommodate such an assessment. This equity assessment apprehension extends, also, to the construction of bill reports and capital budget scoring for agency projects.

Although there is some cause for concern from an agency perspective, the benefits conferred upon the residents of Baltimore City must be given greater weight. For this reason, BCHD urges a favorable report.

⁶ Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimarket, <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/programs/baltimarket>