

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 05-0070R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: President Dixon, Councilmembers Holton, Branch, Kraft, Young, Harris, Curran,
Conaway, Reisinger, Welch, Mitchell, Clarke

Introduced and read first time: July 11, 2005

Assigned to: Committee of the Whole

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Human Resources, Department of
Social Services, Mayor's Office of Children, Youth, and Families

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Joint Investigative Hearing – Baltimore City Children in Foster Care**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting the Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House
4 Delegations to the 2006 Maryland General Assembly to come together with the Members of
5 the Baltimore City Council to hold a joint investigative hearing to explore the systemic
6 problems in the Baltimore City Department of Social Services that led to the current crisis in
7 the care of emotionally fragile youth and to identify corrective fiscal, administrative, and
8 personnel-related interventions to insure that our most vulnerable children are provided
9 adequate and appropriate care.

10 **Recitals**

11 Recently, the media highlighted the alarming condition of Baltimore City's foster care
12 system when it reported that children who should have been cared for in a loving and nurturing
13 environment were instead spending nights in a downtown Baltimore City Department of Social
14 Services' office building and spending days anywhere but in the classrooms where they should
15 have been receiving an education.

16 Child advocates were scandalized that perhaps dozens of children were housed in a waiting
17 room in the building on Gay Street night after night, with no access to showers, personal
18 grooming necessities, or blankets. While the boys spent the night upright in hard plastic chairs,
19 some of the girls slept on thin mats on the floor. Staff watched over the children and provided
20 them with fast-food meals. The children did not attend school.

21 The Director of the agency acknowledged that it was a violation of State law to allow the
22 children to spend the night at the 24-hour intake center because it is not licensed to provide
23 childcare, but attributes the use of the office as a temporary shelter to 2 factors – service
24 providers who refuse to take in troubled foster care children and foster care children who have
25 figured out that they can go to the office for free food and other services rather than go to a more
26 restrictive facility from which they are unable to freely walk away.

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

1 At the same time this problem has come to light, the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
2 is holding hearings regarding the oversight of homes for abandoned, abused, delinquent, and
3 medically fragile children. Part of the focus is on the recommendation of advocacy groups to
4 place responsibility for the monitoring of conditions in these group homes with a single agency,
5 instead of the 4 State agencies that are currently involved. The Departments of Human
6 Resources, Health and Mental Hygiene, and Juvenile Services license and monitor their affiliated
7 group homes, while the Department of Education determines the rates of reimbursement for care.

8 During the 1st of 3 hearings scheduled by the Committee, Senators decried the State’s
9 oversight of privately run group homes for troubled youths as a “disaster” that has existed for at
10 least a decade. In these State-funded homes, an unconscionable number of the 2700 emotionally,
11 psychiatrically, and medically frail youth in the system were being mistreated or neglected by
12 under trained and unqualified staff, some with criminal backgrounds.

13 With such horrendous conditions in the groups homes where these youth would most likely
14 end up, or be returned to, it is no surprise that they would rather spend their time in the
15 uncomfortable and comfortless waiting room of a cold office building. We have to make sure
16 that a safe and nurturing environment is in place to shelter these kids who need a safe haven
17 from the stark realities that have far too soon become a part of their young lives.

18 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
19 Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the 2006 Maryland
20 General Assembly are requested to come together with the Members of the Baltimore City
21 Council to hold a joint investigative hearing to explore the systemic problems in the Baltimore
22 City Department of Social Services that led to the current crisis in the care of emotionally fragile
23 youth and to identify corrective fiscal, administrative, and personnel-related interventions to
24 insure that our most vulnerable children are provided adequate and appropriate care.

25 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That the findings of the joint legislative hearing will be
26 submitted to the Governor and the Mayor, with requests for appropriate action no later than 2
27 weeks following the date of the hearing.

28 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor; the
29 Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the 2006 Maryland
30 General Assembly; the Mayor; the Secretary, Maryland Department of Human Resources; the
31 Director, Baltimore City Department of Human Resources; the Chief Attorney, Baltimore Child
32 Advocacy Unit at the Maryland Legal Aid Bureau; the Administrator, Citizens Review Board for
33 Children; the Executive Director, Advocates for Children and Youth; the Director, Governor’s
34 Office of Children for Children, Youth, and Families; the Managing Attorney, the Maryland
35 Disability Law Center; the Executive Director, the Mayor’s Office for Children, Youth, and
36 Families; and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.