

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 05-0108R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Mitchell, D'Adamo, President Dixon, Councilmembers Holton,  
Young, Curran, Rawlings Blake, Clarke, Harris, Kraft, Reisinger, Conaway, Welch  
Introduced and read first time: November 21, 2005  
Assigned to: Education, Housing, Health, and Human Services Committee

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Committee Report: Favorable  
Adopted: April 23, 2007

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**A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING**

**1 Informational Hearing – Is Baltimore the City That Reads?**

2 FOR the purpose of determining the status of adult literacy in Baltimore City, of calling upon  
3 adult literacy centers to share current factual and anecdotal information about the population  
4 they serve, of assessing Baltimore City's progress toward more closely approaching the  
5 optimistic moniker of *The City That Reads*, and of identifying what measures still need to be  
6 implemented to combat illiteracy and its attendant problems on a City-wide basis.

**7 Recitals**

8 According to the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) by the U.S. Department of  
9 Education, approximately 40 million adults have limited literacy skills, making tasks such as  
10 filling out an application or reading a food label difficult, and 10% of 4-year college graduates  
11 with full-time employment have low literacy skills. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports  
12 that only 25% of the nation's workforce can read a description of 2 kinds of employee benefits  
13 and explain the differences, and only 26% can use an eligibility pamphlet to calculate how much  
14 supplemental security income they would receive.

15 Illiteracy cuts across all racial and ethnic groups and severely impacts the quality of life that  
16 individuals are able to attain. Illiteracy creates a deficit of self-esteem that alienates the non-  
17 reader from the larger society. Disturbingly, 20% of high school graduates cannot read their  
18 diplomas; 85% of unwed mothers are illiterate; and 70% of Americans who are arrested cannot  
19 read. Illiteracy is a communicable affliction - an adult who cannot read is unable to provide the  
20 support that a child needs to succeed in school nor is the adult able to pass on to the child  
21 important life skills.

22 In 2002, Baltimore Reads, a literacy group, reported that 38% of the adult population in  
23 Baltimore, or nearly twice the statewide illiteracy rate, could not read. In this city, where the  
24 drop-out rate still approaches 50%, 200,000 adults, or 46% of the population over the age of 16,  
25 have not completed high school. About a third of Baltimore residents in this same age group are  
26 unable to fully comprehend a front-page news story. Such limitations are particularly  
27 catastrophic in a population seeking to make a livelihood in an old industrial city that has  
28 evolved into a cerebral-based center of commerce.

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

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1 Thankfully, there are dedicated groups across the City who are fighting to eliminate the  
2 nemesis of illiteracy. In addition to Baltimore Reads, these groups, many staffed by selfless  
3 volunteers, include: Bon Secours Family Support Family Support Center; DRU Family Support  
4 Center; Greater Homewood Community Corporation Adult Literacy & ESOL Program; Harford  
5 Heights Elementary Even Start; Literacy Works, Inc.; Maryland Department of Education Even  
6 Start and Family Literacy; Park Heights Family Support Center; South Baltimore Learning  
7 Center; The Learning Bank of Coil, Inc.; Waverly Family Support Center; and Young Parent  
8 Support Center.

9 We hope to learn from representatives and participants in these and other programs what  
10 progress has been made and what needs there are still to be met to make Baltimore City not only  
11 the City that reads but the City that reads well.

12 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That this  
13 Body will hold an informational hearing to determine the status of adult literacy in Baltimore  
14 City, calling upon adult literacy centers to share current factual and anecdotal information about  
15 the population they serve, assessing Baltimore City’s progress toward more closely approaching  
16 the optimistic moniker of *The City That Reads*, and identifying what measures still need to be  
17 implemented to combat illiteracy and its attendant problems on a City-wide basis.

18 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That by copy of this Resolution, organizations mentioned in  
19 the recitals are cordially invited to share their knowledge, their triumphs, and their challenges  
20 with the City Council and are encouraged to bring recipients of their services to share first-  
21 person knowledge of the importance of their efforts to combat illiteracy.

22 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
23 Directors of the Literacy Programs listed in this Resolution, the CEO of Baltimore City Public  
24 Schools, the Director of Baltimore City Department of Social Services, the Director of the  
25 Mayor’s Office of Neighborhoods, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.