

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 16-0280R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmember Clarke, President Young, Councilmembers Curran, Scott, Costello, Middleton, Henry, Stokes, Kraft, Welch, Mosby, Holton, Branch, Spector, Reisinger

Introduced and read first time: January 11, 2016

Assigned to: Education and Youth Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Health Department, Department of Housing and Community Development

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Investigative Hearing – Lead Paint Poisoning and Baltimore’s Children**

3 FOR the purpose of assessing the status and accelerating the pace of eradicating lead paint  
4 poisoning in Baltimore City and Maryland as a whole and working to achieve consensus on  
5 the coordinated roles and investments required to spare Baltimore’s families and children  
6 from another generation of this devastating and preventable disease.

7 **Recitals**

8 Banned in Baltimore in 1950 and by the federal government in 1978, lead paint still remains  
9 in hundreds of Baltimore City rental units, infecting young children when it deteriorates and  
10 children ingest or absorb lead particles or dust, for example, by sucking their fingers after  
11 touching a lead dust surface.

12 As described in The Baltimore Sun’s report of December 6, 2015 (“Kids still falling through  
13 cracks”), “Even a minute dose can subtly damage a young child’s developing brain and nervous  
14 system, studies show, making it harder for the child to learn to read, think, and retain  
15 information. Lead poisoning can also make it harder for a youngster to sit still, and make the  
16 child more prone to act out. Studies have found poisoned children are more likely to struggle in  
17 school and to get in trouble, both as juveniles and adults.” Children under 6 years old are the  
18 most vulnerable to lead poisoning and its effects.

19 Thanks to 1994 State legislation and the intensified collaboration between the Maryland  
20 Department of the Environment (MDE) and Baltimore’s Health and Housing departments --- and  
21 advocacy groups such as Baltimore’s Green & Healthy Homes Initiative --- lead poisoning is less  
22 common than in the past, with new City cases dropping by 86% since 2002.

23 That 1994 law requires annual rental unit registrations; and, inspections, certifications, and  
24 public posting to confirm a unit’s lead-safe status before rental to households with children.  
25 During tenancy, landlords are required to maintain the lead-safe status and provide temporary  
26 relocation if remediation is needed.

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

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1 Despite dedicated leadership and personnel, the State’s watchdog function and coordination  
2 with City agencies are compromised by limited personnel and inadequate database backup.  
3 MDE has fewer than a dozen inspectors to inspect 400,000 rental units throughout Maryland.  
4 Various databases lack coordination, making online tracking difficult. Rental unit registrations  
5 are lagging. City Housing inspection and code enforcement partner with MDE for lead paint  
6 compliance in Baltimore City, but the system is overwhelmed, reduced to responding to  
7 complaints in lieu of pro-active and systematic enforcement.

8 One major additional concern is that, although no level of lead paint poisoning is without  
9 irreversible and lifelong physical and emotional effects, the legal level for lead poisoning in  
10 Maryland is 10 micrograms per deciliter (10ug/dL). As MDE reports, however, more than 1,000  
11 Baltimore children tested between 5 and 9 micrograms per deciliter in 2013. The first 10ug/dL’s  
12 are the most damaging, and these poisoned children are below the radar screen of an already  
13 overwhelmed system.

14 There are signs of encouragement. Governor Larry Hogan is launching an “early warning  
15 system,” urging medical providers to conduct blood tests for lead poisoning on all 1-and  
16 2-year-olds in Maryland. Only 20% are tested now. MDE is reaching out to engage City faith  
17 and higher education leaders in promoting this early testing and effective follow-up.

18 We urge the State to make that follow-up “effective” by revising its “trigger” lead level for  
19 enforcement to at least the 5ug/dL cited by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
20 (CDC). We likewise urge a major increase of State MDE funding to achieve personnel and data  
21 capacity sufficient to enforce the lead paint poisoning law effectively for the existing and  
22 hopefully expanded cohort of victims identified.

23 From the homefront, we ask our Baltimore City Housing, Health and non-profit  
24 representatives to meet with the City Council and help us involve our State MDE partners and  
25 Baltimore City families affected by lead paint poisoning in a dialogue to discuss the status of  
26 efforts to eradicate lead paint poisoning within a time certain and the specific financial and  
27 personnel resources required to do so at the local and State levels.

28 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the  
29 Council calls for a hearing to assesses the status, and accelerate the pace, of eradicating lead paint  
30 poisoning in Baltimore City and Maryland as a whole while encouraging efforts to achieve  
31 consensus on the coordinated roles and investments required to spare Baltimore’s families and  
32 children from another generation of this devastating and preventable disease.

33 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
34 Governor, the Health Commissioner, the Deputy Housing Commissioner for Green, Healthy, and  
35 Sustainable Homes, the Deputy Director of the Maryland Department of the Environment’s  
36 Office of Communications, the Deputy Secretary for Regulatory Programs & Policy in the  
37 Maryland Department of the Environment, the Baltimore City Delegation to the Maryland  
38 General Assembly, the President & CEO of the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative, the Director  
39 of the Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital, the Legislative Committee Chair of the Maryland  
40 Multi Housing Association, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.