



BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE

Mission Statement

On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the mission of the Health Committee is to study, examine and propose regulations concerning health and environmental issues; and to make recommendations and propose legislation for improving the overall health and welfare of all residents of Baltimore City.

**The Honorable Kristerfer Burnett
Chairman**

PUBLIC HEARING

**THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2020
5:00 PM**

CLARENCE "DU" BURNS COUNCIL CHAMBERS

TO BE TELEVISED ON CHARM TV 25

***Council Resolution #20-0194R – Informational Hearing -
Baltimore's Strategic Response to the Wuhan Coronavirus***

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BILL SYNOPSIS

Committee: Health

Council Resolution: 20-0194R

Informational Hearing – Baltimore’s Strategic Response to the Wuhan Coronavirus

Sponsor: *President Scott and Councilmember Burnett, et al*
Introduced: *February 10, 2020*

Purpose:

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore City Health Department, the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management, the Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore City Fire Department, and the Baltimore City Department of Finance to brief the City Council on Baltimore’s strategic response to the Wuhan coronavirus.

Effective: Upon enactment.

Agency Reports

Health Department
Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management
Police Department
Fire Department
Finance Department
Baltimore City Public School System
Mayor’s Office of Human Services
Baltimore City Information Technology
Department of Transportation

Analysis

Current Law

The Health Code of Baltimore City, outlines the rules, regulations and mandates for health related issues.

Background

A coronavirus is a common infection that almost everyone gets at least once in their life.¹

Human coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that have been around for decades. They can cause mild illness and symptoms like runny nose, headache, cough, sore throat, and a fever.²

Two newer coronaviruses, SARS and MERS, have been known to cause severe illness including pneumonia and bronchitis and can be deadly.³

The disease caused by a new virus that emerged late last year in China and has since killed more than 1,000 people and sickened tens of thousands now has an official name: **COVID-19**. The acronym stands for **coronavirus disease 2019**.⁴

The World Health Organization said it had decided on the name after consulting with the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health.⁵

Since the coronavirus was first reported in China in December 2019 it has spread to 70 countries, including the United States.⁶

According to the World Health Organization, **COVID-19** is spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are shared when a person with the virus coughs or exhales. The droplets land on objects or surfaces and are picked up when others touch those places, then touch their eyes, nose or mouth. The World Health Organization has also said it's important to stay more than 3 feet from an infected person to avoid directly breathing in any exhaled droplets.⁷


More than 90,000 people across 70 countries have been infected during the outbreak. The global death toll is more than 3,000. Six have died from it in the U.S., both on the West Coast⁸

Per the primary sponsor of the Resolution, on Thursday, March 5, 2020, agencies will come before the committee to discuss how the city plans to deal with this epidemic. *Also see attached article taken from the March 3, 2020 Baltimore Sun newspaper.*

Additional Information

Fiscal Note: None

Information Source(s): News Articles, google search and Council Resolution 20-0194R.

Analysis by: 
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Analysis Date: March 3, 2020

¹ News Articles and Google Search

² News Articles and Google Search

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ News Article, Baltimore Sun Newspaper, March 3, 2020

NEWS ARTICLE ATTACHED

Baltimore Sun
March 3, 2020

No state coronavirus cases

Three test negative for the disease in Maryland, one more under review



In South Korea, new nurse officers are trained at the Korea Armed Forces Nursing Academy in Daejeon on the COVID-19 disease before heading to Daegu to help. South Korea confirmed 599 new coronavirus cases on March 2, taking the total to 4,335, authorities said. Alarming clusters of disease continued to swell in Italy and Iran. news pg 11 (YONHAP/Getty-afp)

BY MEREDITH COHN

The new coronavirus continues its sweep across the globe, infecting people in dozens of countries. But there continue to be no confirmed cases in Maryland, as results for three people tested late last week came back negative.

State health officials also reported Monday that one more person is being tested. Two people had previously tested negative.

The Maryland Department of Health has not released any information about the people, other than most had traveled to heavily affected areas such as China.

Thousands of people have been infected around the world since the outbreak began early this year. The number of cases with the disease, called COVID-19, has [risen in recent days](#) across the United States to about 90. Six people have died.

State and national health officials [have warned](#) that there are certain to be more cases in the United States, and there could be extensive disruption to businesses and schools if closures and quarantines are needed to control spread of the virus. It's not clear if and when such actions will be taken, and health officials continue to say overall risks are low.

“We want all Marylanders to know that we’re closely monitoring COVID-19 developments and are working with our federal, state and local partners to help keep you safe and healthy,” Robert R. Neall, Maryland’s health secretary, said in a statement Monday. “But everyone can play a role in preparedness — stay informed and use everyday healthy habits to limit your exposure to illness.”

Neall’s statement came as the health department debuted a set of public service announcements about what residents can do to stave off infections with the new coronavirus, as well as other viruses such as the flu or common cold. Advice includes frequent hand washing, covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze, staying home from school or work when you are sick, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Also, the announcements advise preparing in the same way as you would for a snowstorm with food and medications.

Also Monday, Gov. Larry Hogan attended a White House meeting with Vice President Mike Pence, who is heading the federal government’s response to the virus. Hogan, the chair of the National Governors Association, participated in a teleconference with other governors about the outbreak and the federal preparations. Such teleconferences are now expected to be held weekly, according to the vice president’s office.

Health officials continue to emphasize that most people infected with the coronavirus have mild symptoms and don’t require hospitalization. The respiratory disease presents in a similar way to the flu, which is widespread now. Maryland officials said last week that there have been 3,000 hospitalizations related to the flu and 40 deaths.

For now, samples from suspected cases of coronavirus in Maryland are being sent to the the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. But federal authorities said they have overcome issues with the tests and expect all state labs

to get testing kits by the end of this week so they can get more timely results, in several hours compared with two to three days.

Authorities have asked that people not buy face masks, which do little to prevent healthy people from getting sick and are needed by medical professionals.

More information can be found at health.maryland.gov or by dialing 2-2-1.

A panel of public health experts convened Monday by the Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health said relying on official sources, such as the state health department or the CDC, through the outbreak can slow the spread of misinformation about the virus, its effects and treatments. There is currently no specific treatment and no cure, though efforts are under way to develop a vaccine in Maryland and elsewhere.

Misinformation sows division at a time when cooperation and accurate information are paramount, said Tara Kirk Sell, a senior scholar in the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security and an assistant professor in Hopkins' Department of Environmental Health and Engineering. She said the same thing happened during past public health emergencies such as with Ebola outbreak that began in Africa in 2014.

"There are different efforts to blame different populations," she said. "There are examples of some cures out there that are not going to work. There are calls for people to stockpile masks that are not effective to protect themselves. People can waste money, but they also think they are protected and take actions they shouldn't be taking. The 'cures' can harm people."

Another concern is that people who have symptoms do not have access to care, said Jennifer Nuzzo, a senior scholar in Hopkins' Center for Health Security and an associate professor in the Department of Environmental Health and Engineering and the Department of Epidemiology.

She helped create the global health security index that President Donald Trump cited last week in saying how well prepared the country is for a public health outbreak. Nuzzo said the index that ranks health care capacity and readiness of 195 countries does say the United States ranks high, but that the country had significant issues such as access to health care.

That means not only ensuring there are enough properly trained doctors and nurses to safely care for patients, without spreading infections among themselves and the community, but that people don't fear the cost so much that they avoid seeking care when they are sick.

"Fear of the cost of health care is a deterrent that could create a bad situation," Nuzzo said. "Staying home or in the community infecting others or not seeking

care until late is a problem. We need to make sure the fear of cost is not a barrier to seeking care in an emergency.”

The most effective action will be based on models used in the past to identify the sick, isolate them and inform the public, said Lauren Sauer, director of operations for Hopkins’ Office of Critical Event Preparedness and Response and an assistant professor of emergency medicine in Hopkins’ School of Medicine.

In Maryland, the only people quarantined so far are people who are awaiting test results showing whether they have the virus, but now students returning from study abroad programs are being asked to go home and self-quarantine.

The University of Maryland and Towson University suspended their programs in Italy last week because of a high level of virus spread there and asked students to return to their homes.

The students have been instructed to go home, not back to campus. “Most of these people would not have contracted the virus. We are doing this out of an abundance of caution,” said Joann Boughman, the senior vice chancellor for academic and student affairs at the University System of Maryland.

While they are quarantining themselves, the returning students and faculty have been told to stay away from other people they are living with as much as possible. If they develop symptoms of a fever, cough, or difficulty in breathing, they are instructed to call their own physician or go to an urgent care facility. They have been told not to go to a hospital emergency room because of the risk of infecting more people if they do turn out to have COVID-19.

Boughman said those with symptoms would be tested for the flu first, to rule out that before being tested for the coronavirus. The colleges and universities are developing a mechanism to make sure they are contacted in the event that a returning staff member or student gets sick.

There were 136 students studying in Italy from College Park, and nine student from Towson. Additionally, nine students were told to come back from South Korea by College Park officials.

State health officials have not said if they are in touch with the students or how decisions would be made about quarantining others.

Baltimore Sun reporter Liz Bowie contributed to this article.

Council Resolution 20-0194R

AGENCY REPORTS

None received as of this writing

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 20-0194R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: President Scott, Councilmembers Burnett, Dorsey, Bullock, Henry, Pinkett,
Clarke, Middleton, Cohen, Reisinger, Sneed, Schleifer

Introduced and read first time: February 10, 2020

Assigned to: Health Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Health Department, Mayor's Office of Emergency
Management, Police Department, Fire Department, Department of Finance

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing - Baltimore's Strategic Response to the Wuhan Coronavirus**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore City Health Department, the
4 Mayor's Office of Emergency Management, the Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore
5 City Fire Department, and the Baltimore City Department of Finance to brief the City
6 Council on Baltimore's strategic response to the Wuhan coronavirus.

7 **Recitals**

8 Recently, a new strain of coronavirus was detected in thousands of people worldwide,
9 prompting the World Health Organization to declare a "public health emergency of international
10 concern." Similarly, the United States federal government has declared the coronavirus outbreak
11 a public health emergency. This new strain of coronavirus, also referred to as 2019-nCoV, is a
12 strain that has not been previously found in humans and has lead to nearly 500 deaths around the
13 world as of last week.

14 Most people who were first diagnosed with this infection reported exposure to a large
15 seafood and live animal market in Wuhan, China. Recently, people with this infection did not
16 report contact with this market. Thus, person-to-person spread is occurring, and recently at least
17 one individual has been diagnosed in Maryland.

18 The risk of a Baltimorean contracting coronavirus is generally low – contracting the flu
19 remains a larger threat. However, the Baltimore City Council, on behalf of our constituents, is
20 seeking to assess Baltimore's preparedness both now and in the future should the coronavirus fail
21 to be contained or cured. Specifically, the Council is interested in the level of coordination that
22 is in place with our state and federal partners as well as the City's fiscal readiness for any public
23 health catastrophe.

24 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
25 Council invites representatives from the Baltimore City Health Department, the Mayor's Office
26 of Emergency Management, the Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore City Fire
27 Department, and the Baltimore City Department of Finance to brief the City Council on
28 Baltimore's strategic response to the Wuhan coronavirus.

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

Council Bill 20-0194R

1 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
2 Baltimore City Commissioner of Health, the Baltimore City Police Commissioner, the Chief of
3 the Baltimore City Fire Department, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Emergency
4 Management, the Director of Finance, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the Baltimore City
5 Council.