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**BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE**

Mission Statement

On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the mission of the **Public Health and Environment Committee** is dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of Baltimore's residents by advancing policies that promote health equity, environmental justice, and sustainability. Recognizing the deep connection between public health and the environment, the committee works to reduce health disparities, improve access to essential services, and address climate-related challenges that impact communities.

**The Honorable Phylicia Porter
Chair**

PUBLIC HEARING

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 2025
10:02 AM**

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Council Resolution 25-0021R

Informational Hearing – Well-being of Lesbian Women in Baltimore

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CITY OF BALTIMORE
BRANDON SCOTT – MAYOR
ZEKE COHEN - COUNCIL PRESIDENT



OFFICE OF COUNCIL SERVICES
NANCY MEAD – DIRECTOR
100 N. HOLIDAY STREET
BALTIMORE MD, 21202

BILL SYNOPSIS

Committee: Public Health and Environment

Council Resolution: 25-0021R

Informational Hearing – Well-being of Lesbian Women in Baltimore

Sponsor: *Councilmembers Porter, et al*
Introduced: *April 28, 2025*

Purpose:

FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from the Mayor’s Office, the Baltimore City Health Department, the Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore City Public School System, the Mayor’s Office of Homeless Services, the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development, the Mayor’s Office of LGBTQ Affairs, the Baltimore City Office of Equity and Civil Rights, the Office of the State’s Attorney for Baltimore City, the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, the Maryland Department of Health, and Behavioral Health System Baltimore to update the Council on services provided to, and the general well-being of, lesbian women in Baltimore.

Effective: Upon enactment.

Agency Reports

Health Department	Favorable
Office of LGBTQ Affairs	None as of this writing
Office of Equity and Civil Rights	Favorable
Baltimore City Police Department	Comments
Baltimore City Public School System	None as of this writing
Office of the State's Attorney for Baltimore City	None as of this writing
Department of Social Services	None as of this writing
Mayor's Office of Homeless Services	None as of this writing
Office of the City Administrator	None as of this writing
Mayor's Office of Employment Development	Favorable

Analysis

Background

In light of recent social, medical, and legal attacks on the rights of lesbians, the Baltimore City Council is asking for updates from key agencies, offices, and organizations on the issues facing lesbian women in Baltimore so that the Council may be best equipped to serve their needs amid a time of uncertainty.

On Wednesday, June 11, 2025 the committee will hold a hearing to heard from pertinent agency representatives, offices and/or organizations on this disquiet.

Additional Information

Fiscal Note: None

Information Source(s): Council Bill 25-0021R and all agency reports received as of this writing.

Marguerite Currin

Analysis by: Marguerite Currin
Analysis Date: June 9, 2025

Direct Inquiries to: (443) 984-3485

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

25-0021R

AGENCY REPORTS

SEE ATTACHED



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Mary Beth Haller, Interim Commissioner of Health, Baltimore City Health Department
CC	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
DATE	May 29, 2025
SUBJECT	25-0021R - Informational Hearing – Well-being of Lesbian Women in Baltimore

Position: Favorable

BILL SYNOPSIS

This resolution calls for an informational hearing to be held to discuss the well-being of lesbian women in Baltimore City.

SUMMARY OF POSITION

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) strives to protect health, eliminate disparities, and enhance the wellbeing of everyone in our community through education, coordination, advocacy, and direct service delivery. This includes Baltimore City's LGBTQ community, including lesbian women. BCHD's myriad programs and services are open to all, regardless of sexual orientation.

Queer women (both lesbian and bisexual) are more likely to experience certain negative health outcomes than heterosexual women and queer men. This is due in large part to stigma, which can cause chronic stress that can lead to unhealthy coping behaviors (e.g., smoking) and discourage queer women from seeking health care.ⁱ

Some examples of health outcomes and risk factors that disproportionately affect queer women include being more likely to experience intimate partner violence, being more likely to smoke, and being more likely to experience type II diabetes.^{ii,iii} According to the CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), lesbian and bisexual woman are more likely than heterosexual women to experience intimate partner and/or sexual violence at some point throughout their lifetimes. This disparity exists for both physical and psychological violence, including contact sexual violence, rape, expressive aggression (verbal abuse), coercive control, and physical violence that is non-sexual in nature.ⁱⁱ

BCHD operates programs and initiatives aimed at diabetes prevention, smoking cessation, and teaching youth the knowledge and skills necessary to make healthy decisions in their relationships. Additionally, the agency strives to provide a welcoming and stigma-free environment in our clinics. As an agency, we envision an equitable, just, and well Baltimore where everyone has the opportunity to be healthy and to thrive. As such, we respectfully request a **favorable** report in support of the Council holding an informational hearing to discuss the wellbeing of lesbian women in Baltimore City.

ⁱ Corliss HL, VanKim NA, Jun HJ, Austin SB, Hong B, Wang M, & Hu FB. (2018). Risk of Type 2 Diabetes Among Lesbian, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Women: Findings From the Nurses' Health Study II. *Diabetes Care*. 41(7):1448-1454. doi: 10.2337/dc17-2656.

ⁱⁱ US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 2016/2017 Report on Intimate Partner Violence. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/nisvs/documentation/NISVSReportonIPV_2022.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Ganz, O., Schulz, J., Ehlke, S., King Jensen, J., & Villanti, A. (2024). Cigarette smoking behaviors and nicotine dependence at the intersection of sexual identity and sex in the United States: Findings from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. *Preventive Medicine Reports*. 38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2024.102593>.



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Erin C. Murphy Esq. – Chief of Staff and Government Affairs – Baltimore Police Department
CC	Mayor’s Office of Government Relations
DATE	06/02/25
SUBJECT	25R-0021 Informational Hearing – Well-being of Lesbian Women in Baltimore

Position: Favorable

BILL SYNOPSIS

The Baltimore City Police Department has reviewed resolution 25R-0021 for the purpose of updating the City Council on the services provided by the Department to lesbian women in Baltimore City.

SUMMARY OF POSITION

The Baltimore Police Department supports resolution 25R-0021 and remains committed to treating lesbian members of the Department or those seeking employment with the Department with respect and impartial support. The Department will continue to provide ethical and unbiased services to lesbian woman in Baltimore City when they interact with members of the Department.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Baltimore Police Department does not anticipate a fiscal impact.

AMENDMENTS

The Baltimore Police Department has no requested amendments for Resolution 25R-0021.



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	MacKenzie Garvin, Director, Mayor's Office of Employment Development <i>MacKenzie Garvin</i>
CC	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
DATE	May 30, 2025
SUBJECT	25-0021R – Informational Hearing – Well-being of Lesbian Women in Baltimore

Position: Favorable

BILL SYNOPSIS

The Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) has reviewed City Council Resolution 25-0021R - Informational Hearing – Well-being of Lesbian Women in Baltimore for the purpose of providing an update to the Council on services provided in support of the well-being of lesbian women in Baltimore City.

SUMMARY OF POSITION

MOED is responsible for management and oversight of federal, state and City funds allocated for workforce and for designing and implementing strategies that improve outcomes for job seekers and employers.

At MOED we understand the unique barriers that lesbian women face when seeking and maintaining employment. Despite the 2020 the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County* that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, discrimination against LGBTQ, there are still many employment challenges facing this community. According to a 2023 UCLA School of Law Williams Institute study examining the experiences of discrimination and harassment of nearly 2,000 LGBTQ workers, 47% have experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace at some point in their lives. This same study found that 33% of LGBTQ employees reported that they had left a job at some point in their lives because of how they were treated by their employer based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

MOED is an agency that is deeply committed to serving individuals facing barriers to employment. We are an agency that works with any person regardless of race, religion, sexual

orientation or gender. To serve this commitment, MOED staff have had productive meetings with the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs focused on developing a workforce development programming tailored for the LGBTQ community. Additionally, we have shared platforms like Unite Us and the Access Points Flyer, which help connect community members to essential resources and services. These tools will complement any workforce initiatives by ensuring wrap-around support.

MOED will continue to seek opportunities to broaden our network of partners that work with LGTBQ individuals and provide services to any person that may seek or assistance.

FISCAL IMPACT

As drafted, this Resolution has minimal fiscal impact on MOED.



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Amber Greene, Chief Equity Officer Director, Office of Equity & Civil Rights
ANALYST	Zachary Wellman, Equity Policy Analyst
CC	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
DATE	06/05/2025
SUBJECT	City Council Bill 25-0021R Informational Hearing – Well being of Lesbian Women in Baltimore

POSITION: Favorable

BILL SYNOPSIS

The Office of Equity & Civil Rights (OECR) has reviewed and is herein reporting on City Council Bill 25-0021R – Informational Hearing – Informational Hearing – Well being of Lesbian Women in Baltimore. This is a City Council Resolution that seeks to hold a hearing to provide information on the following:

- Call upon several Baltimore City agencies to testify via a public hearing.
- Request information from those agencies on the services provided to lesbian residents.
- Request information from those agencies on the general well-being of the lesbian community in Baltimore.

SUMMARY OF POSITION

The OECR is excited by the opportunity to present the services it provides to lesbian residents in a public hearing. While the office serves all Baltimoreans, regardless of protected characteristics such as gender identity, we would like to highlight some of the services the OECR provides that address some of the most pressing issues faced by lesbian women.

First, the OECR houses the Baltimore City Commission for Women (WC), which believes in a high quality of life and equal rights, opportunities, and access to services for all women, women-identifying, non-binary, and/or assigned-female-at-birth individuals. The Commission develops information systems, provides advice and counsel, conducts research, hosts educational programming, analyzes policy, and advocates for women's issues to improve the lives of and opportunities for all women, women-identifying, non-binary, and/or assigned-female-at-birth individuals in Baltimore. The Baltimore Commission for Women is a resource for those that they

serve to assist them in accessing information and services intended to improve their lives and the lives of their families.

Next, the OECR houses the Police Accountability Division, which is composed of the Police Accountability Board (PAB) and the Administrative Charging Committee (ACC). The PAB and ACC were created by Maryland state mandate under the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 (Anton's Law).

The PAB receives all complaints of police misconduct, without limitation, involving the public and refers them to the appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation; however, the PAB can not currently assign independent investigators to cases. The PAB also meets quarterly with law enforcement agencies to review and make recommendations on policies. It advises the Mayor and City Council on policing matters and appoints civilian members to other important civilian oversight boards. The ACC is a body of five (5) civilian members, including the Chair of the PAB and four other community members, who review the investigations for the complaints filed with the PAB and decide on disciplinary outcomes.

The PAB and ACC exist to ensure trust, safety, and fairness among the lesbian community of Baltimore when interacting with law enforcement. This is an important component to equity for lesbian women as, according to an ACLU national survey analyzed in Policing Progress: Findings from a National Survey of LGBTQ+ People's Experiences (2024), the ACLU found:

- 9.7% of Lesbian respondents report experiencing physical force by police, compared to 7.0% of non-LGBTQ+ respondents.
- 20% of LGBTQ+ respondents report being arrested, compared to 13.6% of non-LGBTQ+ respondents.
- 22% of Lesbian respondents experienced insulting language by the police as opposed to 9.9% of non-LGBTQ+ respondents.
- 71.5% of Lesbian respondents reported being likely to call the police for help, as opposed to 86.9% of non-LGBTQ+ people.

Finally, the OECR also houses the Community Relations Commission is the City Agency designated to enforce Article 4 of the Baltimore City Code, which prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, color, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, and **gender identity or expression**. Prohibited areas of discrimination include employment, public accommodations, education, health and welfare services, and housing.

The CRC receives and investigates discrimination complaints. They have the authority to subpoena information and witnesses, to hold public hearings when conciliation attempts fail, to issue cease and desist orders, and to take unresolved cases into court. The Commission also develops and monitors formally negotiated conciliatory agreements when a violation is found.

The CRC exists to protect the civil rights of Baltimore's lesbian community and address any discrimination they may face. This is necessary as, according to *Workplace Experiences of Transgender Employees*, a 2024 study by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law, 45% of cisgender LGBTQ+ respondents report being discriminated against or harassed in the workplace because of their gender identity/sexual orientation.

The work of the OECR to combat discrimination and police misconduct against lesbian women is particularly critical amid the numerous executive orders of the Trump Presidential Administration, namely Executive Order 14148 - *Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions* and Executive Order 14288 - *Strengthening and Unleashing America's Law Enforcement to Pursue Criminals and Protect Innocent Citizens*.

Executive Order 14148 - *Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions* marks a rollback of protections for lesbian women in Baltimore. The executive order rescinds the Biden Administration's Executive Order 14075 - *Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals*, which acknowledged federally that lesbian women face systemic discrimination and barriers in accessing programs and services in America. Executive Order 14075 focused on expanding access to comprehensive healthcare, preventing and addressing homelessness and housing instability; protecting students and educators in educational institutions; explicitly combating so-called "conversion therapy"; and ensuring that LGBTQI+ children did not face discrimination in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. With its rescission via Trump's Executive Order 14148, lesbian women are now more susceptible to homophobic discrimination in the aforementioned areas. As a response, the City of Baltimore must be committed to vehemently opposing this discrimination and protecting the civil rights of lesbian women where the federal government refuses.

Executive Order 14288 - *Strengthening and Unleashing America's Law Enforcement to Pursue Criminals and Protect Innocent Citizens* promotes aggressive policing tactics and the further militarization of local law enforcement agencies while combatting efforts to hold law enforcement officers accused of misconduct accountable. Because of the disparities in the policing of lesbian women as noted above and the Trump Administration's defiance against police accountability, it is imperative that the City of Baltimore, through the PAB and ACC, guarantee fair, transparent, and accountable policing.

CONCLUSION

The OECR deeply supports initiatives to improve the equity of Baltimore's lesbian community and works tirelessly to uphold the civil rights of lesbian residents in the City. As such, the OECR respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on City Council Bill 25-0015R and is happy to respond to any questions the committee may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Greene

Amber Greene
Director, Office of Equity & Civil Rights

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 25-0021R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Porter

Cosponsored by: Councilmembers Parker, Conway, Gray, Blanchard, Jones, Ramos, and
President Cohen

Introduced and read first time: April 28, 2025

Assigned to: Public Health and Environment Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Health Department, Office of LGBTQ Affairs, Office
of Equity and Civil Rights, Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Public School System,
Office of the State's Attorney for Baltimore City, Department of Social Services, Mayor's Office
of Homeless Services, Office of the City Administrator

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Well-being of Lesbian Women in Baltimore**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from the Mayor's Office, the Baltimore City Health
4 Department, the Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore City Public School System, the
5 Mayor's Office of Homeless Services, the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, the
6 Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs, the Baltimore City Office of Equity and Civil Rights, the
7 Office of the State's Attorney for Baltimore City, the Baltimore City Department of Social
8 Services, the Maryland Department of Health, and Behavioral Health System Baltimore to
9 update the Council on services provided to, and the general well-being of, lesbian women in
10 Baltimore.

11 **Recitals**

12 Lesbian women are among the many targets of the second Trump administration's various
13 attacks on equality and anti-discrimination efforts. Shortly after returning to office, this
14 White House rescinded a series of executive orders issued by President Biden, including those
15 that protected individuals from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in health care,
16 schools, and beyond. The new administration also included "lesbian" among the scores of terms
17 related to the experiences of LGBTQ people that it culled from the official White House website
18 in service of its broad attack on equality.

19 According to the Boston University School of Public Health, lesbian women may be up to 3
20 times as likely as heterosexual women to report having been sexually assaulted in their lifetime.
21 They are also more likely to become pregnant as teenagers than their heterosexual peers. In light
22 of this, lesbian women in this country and in our City need greater access to support and medical
23 resources, not less.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Council Bill 25-0021R

1 This regressive push has further endangered lesbian women through a political culture that
2 seeks to claw back personal political and social rights, as seen in national pushes seeking to
3 overturn *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. 644 (2015), and thus repeal the right to marriage
4 equality nationally. In light of these social, medical, and legal attacks on the rights of lesbians,
5 this City Council seeks updates from key agencies, offices, and organizations on the issues facing
6 lesbian women in Baltimore so that the Council may be best-equipped to serve their needs amid a
7 time of uncertainty.

8 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That the City
9 Council invites representatives from the Mayor's Office, the Baltimore City Health Department,
10 the Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore City Public School System, the Mayor's Office
11 of Homeless Services, the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, the Mayor's Office of
12 LGBTQ Affairs, the Baltimore City Office of Equity and Civil Rights, the Office of the State's
13 Attorney for Baltimore City, the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, the Maryland
14 Department of Health, and Behavioral Health System Baltimore to update the Council on
15 services provided to, and the general well-being of, lesbian women in Baltimore.

16 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
17 Baltimore City Commissioner of Health, the Baltimore Police Commissioner, the Chief
18 Executive Officer of the Baltimore City Public School System, the Director of the Mayor's
19 Office of Homeless Services, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Employment Development,
20 the Director of the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs, the Director of the Baltimore City Office
21 of Equity and Civil Rights, the State's Attorney for Baltimore City, the Director of the Baltimore
22 City Department of Social Services, the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health, the
23 President and Chief Executive Officer of Behavioral Health System Baltimore, and the Mayor's
24 Legislative Liaison to the City Council.