

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 15-0244R  
(Resolution)**

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

Introduced and read first time: July 20, 2015

Assigned to: Health Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Health Department

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Heroin Task Force Report**

3 FOR the purpose of calling on the Health Commissioner and the Co-Chairs of the Mayor’s Heroin  
4 Treatment and Prevention Task Force to appear before the City Council to report on the  
5 findings and recommendations of the Heroin Treatment and Prevention Task Force.

6 **Recitals**

7 Heroin addiction and abuse has long been a troubling problem in Baltimore. With an  
8 estimated 18,900 individuals who use heroin in Baltimore, it can be accurately described as a  
9 public health epidemic in our city. Last year there were 192 heroin-related overdose deaths in  
10 Baltimore, a 28% increase over 2013.

11 In response to this crisis, Mayor Rawlings-Blake assembled a task force to “closely examine  
12 the problem, measure its scope, identify shortcomings in our treatment system, and develop smart  
13 responses”. In its final report, the Mayor’s Heroin Treatment and Prevention Task Force called  
14 for 10 bold steps to attack the city’s epidemic of heroin and opioid addiction, including having  
15 24/7 “treatment on demand” for substance users and a launching a public education campaign to  
16 encourage treatment and combat stigma.

17 Convened by Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake in October of 2014, the Task Force was  
18 co-chaired by Bernard J. McBride, CEO of Behavioral Health System Baltimore, and Dr. Samuel  
19 Ross, CEO of Bon Secours Baltimore Health System, and was comprised of 35 stakeholders with  
20 diverse experience dealing with substance use – nonprofit leaders, academics, medical experts,  
21 public safety officials, faith leaders, business people, elected officials, and community leaders.

22 This inclusive process gave Task Force members a full view of the challenges posed by  
23 opioid addiction and allowed them to accurately document the scope of the problem and identify  
24 what is being doing well and where efforts need to be improved.

25 As Mayor Rawlings-Blake said in introducing the report:

26 “Baltimore City has the building blocks for a bright future, including  
27 strong neighborhoods, a rich history, thriving anchor institutions and vibrant  
28 cultural activities. But we also face major challenges, including problems

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

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1           stemming from heroin. For decades, heroin and, more recently, other  
2           opioids like prescription narcotics, have disrupted the lives of too many of  
3           our residents and damaged our communities. While we have made progress  
4           in recent years, we continue to face an urgent public health challenge.... all  
5           of us are affected [by opioid abuse]. Abuse of these drugs generates crime,  
6           strains our healthcare system and harms the quality of life for residents in  
7           many communities. In short, heroin and opioid abuse threatens all aspects  
8           of Baltimore’s future.”

9           This report is intended to serve as the City’s blueprint for a stepped up and more effective  
10          response to the addiction epidemic. An estimated \$20 million is needed over three years to  
11          accomplish its goals. Baltimore hopes to involve private partners, as well as the state and federal  
12          government, to assist with funding for the Task Force recommendations.

13          Implementing all of the Task Force’s recommendations will require will and commitment  
14          from all levels of government and our partners in the private sector. The City Council will have  
15          an important role to play in assisting and enabling these efforts, and therefore must be kept fully  
16          informed of the recommendations and the City’s progress in implementing them.

17          **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the  
18          Council calls on the Health Commissioner and the Co-Chairs of the Mayor’s Heroin Treatment  
19          and Prevention Task Force to appear before it to report on the findings and recommendations of  
20          the Heroin Treatment and Prevention Task Force.

21          **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
22          Health Commissioner, the Chief Executive Officer of Bon Secours Baltimore Health System, the  
23          President and Chief Executive Officer of Behavioral Health System Baltimore, and the Mayor’s  
24          Legislative Liaison to the City Council.