

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 16-0304R
(Resolution)**

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

Introduced and read first time: May 16, 2016

Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Baltimore City Public School System

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – BCPS CEO Search Process**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting that members of the Baltimore City Board of School
4 Commissioners appear before the Council to discuss the secret search process conducted to
5 hire a new CEO, and answer questions regarding how the search was conducted, how
6 candidates were vetted, and how the decision on the new CEO was made.

7 **Recitals**

8 In December, 2015, the school board met privately with former CEO Gregory Thornton to
9 inform him that the board would look for a new CEO beginning in January, 2016. At that point,
10 rather than announce this news publicly so that parents and legislators could participate, the
11 board made an intentional decision to conduct the search in secret.

12 The board took several steps to keep this process discrete. Its chairman, Marnell Cooper,
13 made public comments suggesting Dr. Thornton would retain the job after the end of the 2015-
14 2016 school year. Its members privately reached out to potential candidates. No press releases,
15 public statements, or other communications were issued indicating to students and their parents
16 that a search was underway.

17 Perhaps most distressingly, the school board worked with an as-yet-unnamed private
18 company to pay a search firm \$36,000 to conduct the vetting process, shutting the public out of
19 the process entirely. As the firm was paid by the private company, no public vote was needed to
20 approve the contract, effectively shutting out all of the stakeholders in the process except the
21 members of the school board.

22 A search process that raises as many questions as the one carried out by the school board
23 unfairly allows concerns about that process to color perceptions of the new CEO, Dr. Sonja
24 Santelises. Dr. Santelises may well have been the most able and qualified candidate interviewed
25 for the position. However, the covert nature of the search unfortunately lends itself to parents
26 and legislators questioning her appointment right out of the gate.

27 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
28 Council requests that members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners appear
29 before it to discuss the secret search process conducted to hire a new CEO, and answer questions

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

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1 regarding how the search was conducted, how candidates were vetted, and how the decision on
2 the new CEO was made.

3 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
4 Chair of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, and the Mayor's Legislative
5 Liaison to the City Council.