
CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON SCOTT – MAYOR



ZEKE COHEN - COUNCIL PRESIDENT



OFFICE OF COUNCIL SERVICES

NANCY MEAD – DIRECTOR

100 N. HOLIDAY STREET

BALTIMORE MD, 21202

HEARING NOTES

Bill: LO25-0018

Title: Homeless Services

Committee: Housing & Economic Development

Chaired by: James Torrence

Hearing Date: 11/4/2025

Time (Beginning): 6:45 PM

Time (Ending): 9:20: PM

Location: Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex

Total Attendance: Approximately 40

Committee Members in Attendance:

James Torrence, Antonio Glover, Odette Ramos, Jermaine Jones, Zac Blanchard

Bill Synopsis in the file?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Attendance sheet in the file?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Agency reports read?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Evidence of notification to property owners?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Final vote taken at this hearing?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Motioned by:			
Final Vote:			

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

Ernestia Simmons – Director Mayor’s Office of Homeless Services

Major Issues Discussed

- Chair Torrence opened the hearing – introducing the bill and members
- Opening comments from Chair Torrence
 - *Request to consider an Independent Ombudsman for MOHS*
- The floor was open to a presentation from MOHS (Slides in file).
- The floor was open to questions from members topics included:
 - When did planning start for the winter shelter process for 2026-27?

- *Requesting emails from MOHS on emails when planning for winter shelter* what day and month did the 2025 plans begin. * Safety Plans for these locations 2 weeks*
 - Rec & Parks, DGS, BCPSS (surplus schools and police), MOHS –
 - *Asking for a standard planning process for winter shelter for MOHS, Mayor's Office, & other agencies to begin at a point in the year before Winter Shelter* 2 weeks
- Will MOHS commit to an Ombudsman or committee to handle grievances or to pricing out what that would cost?
 - Yes, MOHS is willing to explore but with questions as to what a panel would look like. CoC is an independent entity that MOHS works with and there is a question as to how that person would fit into the model.
- Safe sleeping – plastic on a mattress that an infant was sleeping on.
 - Providers should be offering something for infants to be sleeping on such as a pack and play or bassinet ect... available in both family shelter sites
 - *Itemized list with gear in shelters and allow for the Chair to tour shelters to check for himself*
- Staffing for Outreach –
 - 8 team members overseen by the chief of emergency services
 - *Asking for attrition rate for the agency*
- Policy for ongoing contract monitoring – what is the schedule set on this?
 - Program compliance team – ESG min hab standards
 - Emergency services team – walk the shelters
 - *Asking for a meeting to review documentation on monitoring*
- Federal funding for MOHS what is the state planning with the lapse in federal funding.
 - Assistant State Secretary – this is the 1st time that state is creating in permeate supportive housing – City invest more than the state but about 100 units. Next round of tax credit funding is in the spring
 - State can't allocate funds without the budget – emergency session and other intervention will depend on congressional action.
- What is the relationship between MOHS & HABC? Helping to navigate changes in housing
 - 250 project-based vouchers. Teams meet on a weekly basis to do case conferencing with HABC.
- Permeate supportive shelter – what is the endgame from that status
 - Shelter is the 1st step then into permeate housing or supportive housing (residents pay 30% of income – if no income then you don't pay)
- How do we recognize people on the cusp of homelessness and bring that number down – including getting better wages worker benefits and protection
- Missed meetings between MOHS and 13th district to tour and view conditions there
 - Outreach team is at capacity – but they should meet their meetings that they make.
 - Other members noted similar issues with missed meetings, changing emails, ect...
 - Director Simmions to investigate this

- *asking for a meeting about funding for MOHS outreach staff – what is the appropriate staff level and what would it cost to get there. Also creating reserve funds in general dollars in case of issues with federal funding.
- Testimony from advocacy group Housing our Neighbors (HON) report in bill file
- Comments from Chair Torrence
- Additional questions from members included:
- 90 day limit on shelter stay
 - We need to be looking at our homeless response system as a whole – with case management and housing.
 - 90 day policy is in draft form – in response to feedback to multiple stakeholders including the CoC group.
- The floor was open to Public testimony (see sheet in file)
- The hearing was recessed

Further Study

Was further study requested?

☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**

If yes, describe.

- Cost study of an independent ombudsman or committee for MOHS to address the grievance process
- Requesting all emails from MOHS with DGS, BCPSS (school surplus & school police), & BCRP related to winter shelter planning, dates of meetings, All safety plans for the shelter locations
- Asking for MOHS to document a standard planning process for winter shelter for MOHS, Mayor's Office, & other agencies & a consistent time to begin planning for winter shelter every year.
- An itemized list of materials in shelters for safe sleep, and a meeting for the Chair to tour shelters to check for himself
- Asking for the attrition rate in MOHS
- Asking for a meeting for the chair to review documentation on contract monitoring
- What would be the appropriate staffing level for the MOHS outreach team
- Asking for a meeting with the administration about creating a reserve in the general fund for MOHS in the event that there is a lapse in federal funding

Committee Vote:

Chair: Yea
 Vice Chair: Yea
 Member: Yea
 Member: Yea
 Member: Yea

Tony Leva, Date: 11/4/2025

Cc: Bill File
 OCS Chrono File