



## BALTIMORE HOUSING

SHEILA DIXON  
Mayor

PAUL T. GRAZIANO  
Executive Director, HABC  
Commissioner, HCD

# MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council  
c/o Karen Randle, Executive Secretary

From: Paul T. Graziano, Commissioner

Date: March 25, 2008

Re: City Council Bill 08-0070 "Padlock Law" – Scope

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The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) have reviewed City Council Bill 08-0070, which was introduced for the purpose of redefining "public nuisance" to require that there have been a certain number of offenses within a certain period; clarifying the effect of a conviction for an offense; and generally relating to laws governing public nuisances.

The current enforcement practice of the "padlock law" requires at least two convictions for certain offenses on the premises including, but not limited to, prostitution, the manufacture, storage or distribution of drugs, gambling, or gang activity before the property may be declared a public nuisance. Two convictions are extremely difficult to obtain in a timely fashion and therefore the law is very difficult to enforce in its current form.

The proposed ordinance would change the threshold for declaring a property a public nuisance to two or more separate occasions of illegal activity within a 24-month period. According to City Council Bill 08-0070, two police reports, written in the regular course of business, documenting the illicit use of the premises would be sufficient evidence to prove the property is a public nuisance. By lowering the evidentiary burden, this bill finally makes the "padlock law" a useful tool for the Police Department and Housing Code Enforcement to employ in our efforts to preserve and protect safe neighborhoods.

The Department of Housing and Community Development supports the adoption of City Council Bill 08-0070. DHCD defers to the Police and Law Departments for any amendments, if necessary.

PTG:pmd

cc: Ms. Angela Gibson  
Mr. Demaune Millard

