

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 21-0010R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Middleton, Porter, Burnett, Bullock, Ramos, Torrence, Conway
Introduced and read first time: January 25, 2021

Assigned to: Health, Environment, and Technology Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, 311, Department of Public Works, Health Department, Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Recreation and Parks, City Administrator, Baltimore Development Corporation, Mayor’s Office of Performance and Innovation, Environmental Control Board, Baltimore City Information Technology

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Getting on the Same Page: Clarifying 311 Services’ Approach to**
3 **Resolving Requests**

4 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from 311 Services, the Department of Public Works,
5 the Department of Transportation, the Department of Housing and Community Development,
6 the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Office of the City Administrator, the Baltimore
7 Development Corporation, BGE, and the Mayor’s Office of Performance and Innovation to
8 appear before the City Council to discuss how to improve the status classifications within the
9 311 to make them better understandable, more transparent, and more reliable for the citizens
10 of Baltimore.

11 **Recitals**

12 As the first city to launch a 311 service in 1996, Baltimore has pioneered the use of
13 centralized call centers for non-emergency complaints. The expansion of 311 to include a much
14 broader range of services around the turn of the century and the introduction of a free 311
15 smartphone app for reporting and tracking service requests continued Baltimore’s path-breaking
16 role in the field. During its existence, the 311 system has created over 13,000,000 service
17 requests on behalf of Baltimore City residents, businesses, and visitors.

18 However, citizens still raise concerns about the efficiency of 311’s centralized complaint
19 system and their ability to track the City’s progress towards resolving complaints. Some feel that
20 the current system does not provide sufficient transparency as to which agency is responsible for
21 a particular complaint or what actions have been taken to “close” a service request. Seeing a
22 “closed” 311 status for an issue that a citizen can see with their own eyes is still on-going is
23 particularly galling and embarrassing for the City.

24 Further, simple requests often get lost in the byzantine patchwork of agency duties and
25 responsibilities when agencies internally refer certain matters to each other for resolution without
26 alerting the citizen who reported the matter. Without being notified of these inter-agency
27 referrals, citizens face the anxiety of thinking that the City is being unresponsive or delaying their

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

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1 response. In other instances, citizens are simply not made aware of what tools are available for
2 tracking service requests and are left in the dark about the results of their calls.

3 All of this raises the simple question – is 311 working? How many service requests are
4 satisfactorily resolved and how many instead go unanswered or are “closed” by the system but
5 then require follow-up requests by residents who aren’t satisfied by the initial response? When
6 service requests are referred to other City agencies, are customers connected to the proper people
7 at those agencies to follow-up on their requests? Does 311 Services make repeated efforts, if
8 necessary, to determine whether agencies have fulfilled service requests? If 311 Services directs
9 a service request to the wrong agency, does it have a system in place so that similar service
10 requests will be reported to the correct agency in the future? The City Council is interested in
11 learning the answers to these and similar questions at an informational hearing.

12 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
13 Baltimore City Council invites representatives from 311 Services, the Department of Public
14 Works, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Housing and Community
15 Development, the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Office of the City Administrator, the
16 Baltimore Development Corporation, BGE, and the Mayor’s Office of Performance and
17 Innovation to appear before the City Council to discuss how to improve the status classifications
18 within the 311 to make them better understandable, more transparent, and more reliable for the
19 citizens of Baltimore.

20 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor,
21 Director of 311 Services, Director of the Department of Public Works, Director of the
22 Department of Transportation, the Acting City Administrator, the Executive Director of the
23 Baltimore Development Corporation, the Commissioner of the Department of Housing and
24 Community Development, the City Arborist, BGE’s Vice President of Support Services, the
25 Director of the Mayor’s Office of Performance and Innovation, and the Mayor’s Legislative
26 Liaison to the City Council.