

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 10-0186R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Young, Kraft, Holton, Henry, Reisinger, Welch, Middleton,  
Clarke, Conaway

At the request of: City Union of Baltimore

Address: c/o Brenda J. Clayburn, President, 2117 North Howard Street, Baltimore, Maryland  
21218-5608

Telephone: 410-962-1492

Introduced and read first time: January 25, 2010

Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Police Commissioner

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Investigative Hearing – The Status of the 311 Non-Emergency and**  
3 **911 Emergency Response Systems**

4 FOR the purpose of requesting the Baltimore Police Commissioner, the Baltimore Fire Chief,  
5 and the Interim Chief of the Mayor’s Office of Information Technology (MOIT) to report to  
6 the City Council on the efficacy of the separate systems, on the effect of the 311 non-  
7 emergency response system in abating the number of police and fire units deployed to non-  
8 emergency calls, and the rationale for the proposed merger of the 911 Emergency and 311  
9 Non-emergency response call centers.

10 **Recitals**

11 The Managing Calls to the Police With 911/311 Systems, February 2005, research for  
12 practice of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of  
13 Justice, found that in response to many 911 systems being overwhelmed with calls, most of them  
14 not emergencies, some jurisdictions introduced 311 non-emergency systems. Researchers found  
15 that in Baltimore calls to 911 decreased by almost 5,000 per week after 311 was implemented.

16 Dispatch Magazine On-Line credits Baltimore City with being the first to locally implement  
17 the 311 system, in October 1996. The 311 number was then approved for nationwide use by the  
18 Federal Communications Commission in 1997, after the President endorsed the 311 non-  
19 emergency response system concept as part of the community-involved policing campaign. As  
20 of September 2008, about 55.8 million people have access to the 311 number, about 18% of the  
21 U.S. population.

22 The Department of Justice study found that Baltimore’s innovative development of the 311  
23 non-emergency response system has not been entirely successful. While the overall burden on  
24 911 was reduced and citizen use of and satisfaction with call 311 was high, “the 311 system’s  
25 impact on policing was muted because the department’s response and dispatching protocols were  
26 not changed when the system was implemented.”

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

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1 “The researchers noted 3 key areas that the 311 system was expected to have affected that  
2 actually showed little impact:

- 3 • *Response Times.* Response times for priority 1 calls to 911 were not lowered; rather,  
4 patrols were dispatched a bit more slowly following the introduction of 311.
- 5 • *Dispatch Policy.* After 311 was implemented, Baltimore police continued  
6 dispatching officers for all calls, whether 911 or 311 (except priority 5 calls).  
7 Officers either did not know or were indifferent about whether a call had been placed  
8 through 911 or 311.
- 9 • *Officer discretionary time.* Researchers discovered only a marginal gain in  
10 uncommitted blocks of time experienced by patrol units. Almost 2/3rds of officers  
11 surveyed did not perceive a change in how much discretionary time they had  
12 available, most likely because time gains were spread out over shifts and obscured by  
13 the failure to dispatch 311 and 911 calls differently.”

14 The study concludes that the Baltimore City experience suggests that a 311 non-emergency  
15 call system can both relieve and overburden a 911 system and provide the opportunity to  
16 improve and expand community-oriented policing. To best accomplish the latter, a department  
17 must be willing to consider changes in methods and policies, including a dual-dispatch,  
18 consolidated, or centralized operations center.

19 As research shows that a consolidated or dual call center is more effective in bringing about  
20 the desired effect of freeing police and fire to respond to true emergencies and delivering non-  
21 emergency services to citizens expeditiously, surrounding subdivisions are converting their  
22 response systems. For instance, in Baltimore County, the Central Communications Center  
23 provides for “the consolidated receipt of emergency calls, the immediate assessment of the  
24 availability of response vehicles and manpower, and the dispatching of appropriate units to  
25 handle all public service calls throughout the County.”

26 The Council requires an update on the status of a review currently being conducted by MOIT  
27 to determine if the implementation of a similar system will have fiscal and programmatic benefit  
28 to Baltimore City and can be brought about without displacing or demoting personnel.

29 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the  
30 Baltimore Police Commissioner, the Baltimore Fire Chief, and the Interim Chief of the Mayor’s  
31 Office of Information Technology (MOIT) are requested to report to the City Council on the  
32 efficacy of the separate systems, on the effect of the 311 non-emergency response system in  
33 abating the number of police and fire units deployed to non-emergency calls, and the rationale  
34 for the proposed merger of the 911 Emergency and 311 Non-emergency response call centers.

35 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
36 Police Commissioner, the Fire Commissioner, the Interim Chief of MOIT, the Director of  
37 Finance, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.