



BILL SYNOPSIS

Committee: Public Safety and Government Operations

Bill 21-0014

Baltimore City Fire Department – Reporting Requirements

Sponsor: Councilmember Kris Burnett

Introduced: January 11, 2021

Purpose:

For the purpose of requiring the Fire Chief of the Baltimore City Fire Department to report annually certain information to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore; and requiring the report to be made available on the Department’s website.

Effective: Date of enactment

Agency Reports

Law Department	
Fire Department	
Finance	

Proposed Law:

Article 9 – Fire Suppression and Prevention, Section 1 – 9, Baltimore City Code (Edition 2000)

Analysis**Background**

During the 72nd term of the Baltimore City Council, the Labor committee announced a series of Legislative Oversight hearings (LO 19-0053) to evaluate the Baltimore City Fire Departments staffing, promotional practices, and internal succession planning. During these hearings a plethora of information was shared with the committee that identified numerous internal system failures which lead to the current disparity gaps within the organization.

If enacted, Bill 21-0014 Baltimore City Fire Department – Reporting Requirements would mandate that the agency publish a report each year that captures data focused on hiring, promotions, and discipline. The current legislation would also require the fire department to come before a committee of the Baltimore City Council at each phase of a hiring process for entry-level positions in fire suppression and emergency medical services. This will create a level of transparency within the process, and allow the Baltimore City Council to work with the fire department to address barriers when they occur in real time.

Recruitment and Hiring Background

On June 19, 1953, a new Board of Fire Commissioner's voted to open the fire department's entry-level application process to black candidates. The historic votes were cast by Reverend Marion Bascom and attorney Konstantine J. "Gus" Prevas. This decision came after the organization had remained an all-white male department for 94 years after it was officially established in 1859. It was in October of 1953 that the first ten black men who passed the civil service exam were chosen to enter the fire department's training program. Throughout the department's history of segregation, it was the Board of Fire Commissioners that had served prior to 1953, and members of the Civil Service Commission that for decades had refused to appoint black applicants into the fire department. Those blacks who had applied, had their names conveniently designated in red ink by the Civil Service Commission, and skipped over on the list of eligible applicants.

Even after the first African-American candidates were allowed into the fire department, there has been a persistent problem with overcoming this barrier. Whether it is a deliberate attempt to not actively recruit minority candidates, or creating internal systematic barriers to eliminate them from the process, there needs to be active oversight from an outside body over the Baltimore City Fire Department's recruitment and hiring processes.

The last time the Baltimore City Fire Department held a full recruitment and hiring process for entry-level EMT/Firefighter positions was in 2015 after the Freddie Gray riots occurred. One of the resounding phrases that were heard in the aftermath of this tragic incident was that, "people in Baltimore need opportunities." The Baltimore City Fire Department built their 2015 recruitment campaign on the foundation of providing opportunities to city residents. They intended on doing this by reducing barriers that were often faced by city residents and members of minority groups. As a result of their efforts the fire department produced the largest number of applicants (6,547) in the history of the organization.

The problem? Even though the fire department was active in recruiting city residents and minority candidates, they still failed to reduce the internal systematic barriers in the application and hiring process that proved to eliminate those same candidates that they targeted during recruitment (**Page 26 – BCFD Equity Report**).

Baltimore City Fire Department 2015 Recruitment Data Totals

EMT/Firefighter	Demographics
City Residents	2,425
Maryland Residents	4,720
Out of State/Country	1,827
Total:	6,547

Baltimore City Fire Department 2015 Recruitment Data Applicant Demographics

Male	Am Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Nat Hawaiian	White	Unknown
Female	8	5	1,052	28	1	200	10
Male	44	43	2,084	194	12	2,412	94
Total	52	48	3,136	222	13	2,612	104

Baltimore City Fire Department 2015 Final Hiring Process Data

Total Applicant Pool	6,547
Number of Applicants that were invited to the Written Test	3,883 – 3,903
Number of Applicants that showed up to the Written Test	2,626
Number of Applicants who passed the Written Test	2,164
Number of Applicants scheduled for the Physical Agility Test	1,866
Number of Applicants scheduled for the Oral Board Interview	1,093
Number of City Residents Invited to the Oral Board Interview	358
Number of Women Invited to the Oral Board Interview	55

Internal Demographic Data

The number one reason that contributes to the Baltimore City Fire Department’s lack of diversity is their recruitment and hiring process. When taking a deeper look into the demographics, the fire suppression and emergency medical services personnel account for approximately 1,405 of the 1,700 uniformed employees in the Baltimore City Fire Department. Those statistics show that 85% of the fire department’s workforce is male, 65% is Caucasian as seen in the chart below, and approximately 1,080 are not Baltimore City residents (Page 19 – BCFD Equity Report). If this problem is ever going to be corrected, then there has to be a conscience effort during the recruitment and hiring process to build equity into every phase of the process.

Fire Department Operations Bureau Demographics

Operations Bureau	Total	Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Am. Indian	Not Specified
EMS Division	304	162	142	164	126	8	5	0	1
Battalion 1	162	153	9	137	24	0	0	1	0
Battalion 2	152	147	5	126	21	1	3	1	0
Battalion 3	197	188	9	135	56	3	0	1	2
Battalion 4	197	183	14	123	68	3	0	1	2
Battalion 5	180	169	11	80	96	2	2	0	0
Battalion 6	213	200	13	161	46	3	2	0	1
Total	1,405	1,202	203	926	437	20	12	4	6
Total Percentage	100%	85%	14%	65%	31%	0.01%	0.01%	0.00%	0.00%

Note: Battalions encompass a set of fire companies that are assigned to a geographical area within the city. Battalions are similar to Police Districts.

2020 Promotional Data – City Residency

Supervisory promotional data and city residency remains consistent with the percentages highlighted above as personnel move up through the ranks in the fire department, as African-Americans and Women occupy approximately 30% of the 300 civil service supervisory and management positions. When you get to the executive ranks of the fire department there is one female that serves in a uniform capacity, and two civilian females that serve on the command staff out of 15 people (Page 17 – BCFD Equity Report). As it relates to residency, 75% of the fire department’s executive staff live outside of the city limits, including 2 of the 3 Assistant Chiefs who are required by city ordinance to be residents.

Fire Suppression – Promotional Data

RANK	Total Number	Females	White or Caucasian	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino
Battalion Chief	31	1	27	4	0	0
Captain	63	2	53	10	0	0
Lieutenant	167	6	125	40	0	1 (1 OTHER)

Fire Suppression – City Residency

	Total Number	City Residents	Non-City Residents
Lieutenants	167	49	118
Captains	63	16	47

Emergency Medical Services – Promotional Data

RANK	Total Number	Females	White or Caucasian	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino
Battalion Chief	6	2	5	1	0	0
Captain	12	9	10	2	0	0
Lieutenant	21	6	16	5	0	0

Emergency Medical Services – City Residency

	Total Number	City Residents	Non-City Residents
Lieutenants	21	3	18
Captains	12	3	9

For full details around this topic please review the 2020 Labor committees – Comprehensive Fire Department Equity Report. The report provides statistical data on each topic covered, questions that were asked of the fire department during the hearing, and recommendations that were presented to help correct the systematic barriers in the agency.

Additional Information

Fiscal Note: Not Available

Information Source(s): Baltimore City Fire Department

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