



MEMORANDUM

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

From: Alice Kennedy, Acting Housing Commissioner AK

Date: October 22, 2020

Re: City Council Bill 20-0558 City Officers and Employees - Commuting Benefits

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Bill 20-0558 for the purpose of requiring that the Department of Human Resources have a written policy regarding certain parking benefits; requiring the Department of Human Resources offer a public mass transit subsidy to every officer and employee of the City; requiring the Department of Human Resources offer a cash equivalent alternative to any City officer or employee entitled or eligible to receive a parking benefit; defining certain terms; and generally relating to encouraging the use of public mass transit by City officers and employees.

If enacted, City Council Bill 20-0558 would require the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to create a Commuting Benefits Policy for agency officers and employees. The policy must include a requirement that the City offer a parking cash-out option for those who are currently eligible to receive a parking subsidy. The legislation would also require that employees who are ineligible for a parking subsidy receive a transit benefit.

Currently each agency determines who is granted access to a full parking subsidy, and each agency sets their own process. The criteria currently vary across agencies and would benefit from City wide standardization. However, the number of employees that would be eligible to receive a subsidy or a transit benefit and the financial impact of this legislation is in need of additional research and review.

DHCD supports the intent of the proposed legislation to address the pressing issue of climate change but in consideration of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and the necessity for social distancing, promoting increased use of carpooling and public transportation such as; City Link, Local Link, Light Rail, Metro Subway Link and Baltimore Neighborhood Shuttles might be better considered when the pandemic is easing. Additionally, with many employees working from home, a Task Force or Work Group may be more appropriate to study the proposal for commuting benefits for City Officers and Employees.

DHCD **defers to Finance** on the passage of City Council Bill 20-0558.

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cc: Mr. Blendy, Nicholas, *Mayor's Office of Government Relations*