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BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE

Mission Statement

On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the mission of the Health Committee is to study, examine and propose regulations concerning health and environmental issues; and to make recommendations and propose legislation for improving the overall health and welfare of all residents of Baltimore City.

**The Honorable Kristerfer Burnett
Chairman**

PUBLIC HEARING

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2020
2:00 PM**

VIRTUAL WEBEX MEETING

Council Resolution #20-0239R
Informational Hearing – Responding to Mental Health Crises

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Shannon Sneed
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Staff: Marguerite Currin

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Danielle McCray – Vice Chair
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Staff: Samuel Johnson
- *Larry Greene (pension only)*

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John Bullock
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BILL SYNOPSIS

Committee: Health

Council Resolution: 20-0239R

Informational Hearing – Responding to Mental Health Crises

Sponsor: *Councilmember Cohen, et al*

Introduced: *July 13, 2020*

Purpose:

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Health Department, the Baltimore City Fire Department, Mayor's Office of Human Services, Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc., the 911 Call Center, and advocates of mental health to investigate how behavioral and mental health crises are handled, identify gaps, and develop the best path forward for addressing and de-escalating crises.

Effective: Upon enactment.

Agency Reports

Police Department
Health Department

Favorable
Defers to Behavioral Health
System/No Objections
Does Not Oppose

Fire Department
Office of Human Services/Mayor's Office of Family and
Children Success

Analysis

Current Law

The Health Code of Baltimore City, outlines the rules, regulations and mandates for health related issues.

Background

The purpose of the hearing is to investigate how behavioral and mental health crises are handled, to identify gaps and develop the best path forward for addressing and de-scaling crises.

Per the primary sponsor of the Resolution, “This Resolution calls for a hearing to examine the system that currently exist. To discuss how we response to mental health crises and behavioral health issues. To reimagine and/or rethinking public safety; a system that does not criminalize mental health. We want the correct professions on the scene to address mental health; the Police Department should not have to show up alone to address mental health crises. The goal is to: truly decriminalize mental health.”¹

Additional Information

Fiscal Note: None

Information Source(s): Health Code, Council Resolution 20-0239R, see footnote, and all agency reports received as of this writing.

Marguerite M. Currin

Analysis by: Marguerite M. Currin
Direct Inquiries to: 443-984-3485

Analysis Date: September 21, 2020

¹ The Honorable Zeke Cohen, Councilman, Baltimore City Council, 1st District

Council Resolution 20-0239R
AGENCY REPORTS



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



BERNARD C. "JACK" YOUNG
Mayor

MICHAEL S. HARRISON
Police Commissioner

September 21, 2019

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

RE: City Council Bill #20-0239R
Informational Hearing – Responding to Mental Health Crises

Dear Council President Scott and Members of the City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed Council Bill 20-0239R. This legislation is for the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Health Department, the Baltimore city Fire Department, Mayor's Office of Human Services, Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc., the 911 Call Center, and advocates of mental health to investigate how behavioral and mental health crises are handled, identify gaps, and develop the best path forward for addressing and de-escalating crises.

The Baltimore Police Department supports this resolution and looks forward to presenting how the Department has been working with Behavioral Health System Baltimore to satisfy the Consent Decree requirements related to this topic. For your information, we have included a brief synopsis of our efforts to date:

Baltimore City Consent Decree

The [Baltimore City Consent Decree](#) includes nearly 30 paragraphs of specific reforms aimed at identifying gaps in the city's behavioral health crisis response system, revising the BPD's policies related to interactions with individuals experiencing behavioral health disabilities or crisis, and enhancing all levels of crisis response training for BPD members. The Decree envisions the least police-involved response to crisis events consistent with public safety, favoring new strategies at the 911/Dispatch and on-scene, patrol level that divert calls towards community resources away from law enforcement. The Decree also prescribes that the BPD participate in a city-wide collaborative body, known as the Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee (CPIC), to effectuate the required reforms in policy, training, data collection, and implementing the recommendations of the Gaps Analysis report.

Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee

The Mayor's Office, BPD, and BHSB work closely with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and members of the Consent Decree Monitoring Team to address the behavioral health requirements in the City's 2017 Consent Decree with the U.S. Department of Justice. This includes co-chairing the [Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee \(CPIC\)](#) and its four sub-committees.

Key Milestones:

Jul 2019	DOJ and Court-Appointed Monitoring Team approve the following BPD Polices: 712 , Crisis Intervention Program 713 , Petition for Emergency Evaluation & Voluntary Admission 715 , Behavioral Health Crisis Dispatch
Nov 2019	BHSB & Disability Rights Maryland host Decriminalizing Disabilities Symposium to get community input into CPIC priorities
Dec 2019	BPD release the Baltimore Public Behavioral Health System Gaps Analysis Report
May 2020	BPD implements Behavioral Health Awareness Training Curriculum: 911 & Dispatch for all new officers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavioral Health Awareness – 24 hours, police academy trainees• Behavioral Health Awareness – 8 hours, veterans (began September 2020)• Behavioral Health Awareness – 8 hours, police dispatchers and 911 operators (will ideally begin October 2020)• Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) – 40 hours, veteran patrol officers (will begin Q1 2021)• Crisis Response – 1 hour, veterans (e-learning)
Jul 2020	BHSB submit Greater Baltimore Regional Integrated Crisis System Regional Partnership proposal to HSCRC for an estimated \$45 million over 5 years for behavioral health crisis services BHSB and DOJ host a Town Hall on Behavioral Health, Police Reform and the Consent Decree

Gaps Analysis Report

The <https://www.baltimorepolice.org/baltimore-public-health-system-gap-analysis> report was approved by the Department of Justice and submitted to the federal court in December 2019. It analyzes existing public behavioral health service systems to identify unmet needs, service gaps, barriers to accessing care, opportunities for better collaboration, and other recommended system improvements, particularly as they pertain to decreasing or improving interactions with police.

Implementation Priorities:

1. Behavioral Health Crisis Services
2. Affordable Housing
3. 911 Dispatch/Diversion
4. Expanding Peer Recovery Support Workforce

The Baltimore Police Department fully supports this resolution and looks forward to a robust discussion at the hearing. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,




Michelle Wirzberger, Esq.
Director of Government Affairs

cc: Natwana Austin, Executive Secretary
Matt Stegmand, Mayor's Legislative Liaison
Eric Melancon, BPD Chief of Staff

c/o 242 West 29th Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21211-2908

Andrew Smullian, BPD Deputy Chief of Staff

FROM	NAME & TITLE	Niles R. Ford, PhD, Chief of Fire Department <i>NR</i>	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Baltimore City Fire Department 401 East Fayette Street-21202		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill #20-0239R Informational Hearing-Responding to Mental Health Crises		


TO

**The Honorable Brandon M. Scott, President
All Members of the Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 408**

DATE: **July 24, 2020**

FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Health Department, the Baltimore City Fire Department, Mayor's Office of Human Services, Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc., the 911 Call Center, and advocates of mental health to investigate how behavioral and mental health crises are handled, identify gaps, and develop the best path forward for addressing and de-escalating crises.

The Baltimore City Fire Department does not object to City Council bill 20-0239R

F R O M	Name & Title	Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Commissioner	Health Department AGENCY REPORT	
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201		
	Subject: Position:	20-0239R – Informational Hearing - Responding to Mental Health Crises NO OBJECTIONS		

To: President and Members
of the City Council
c/o 409 City Hall

September 22, 2020

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #20-0239R, entitled, “Informational Hearing - Responding to Mental Health Crises.” The purpose of this bill is to call on several City agencies and mental health advocates “to investigate how behavioral and mental health crises are handled, identify gaps, and develop the best path forward for addressing and de-escalating crises.”

BCHD is a strong proponent of a “health in all policies” approach, and addressing mental health crises should be no different. Regarding the specifics of how such events should be handled, however, BCHD defers to Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB), the designated local authority on behavioral and mental health. In deferring to BHSB, BCHD has **no objections** to Council Bill #20-0239R.

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 20-0239R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmember Cohen, President Scott, Councilmembers Bullock, Henry, Burnett, Clarke, Middleton, Dorsey, Pinkett, Reisinger, Sneed, Stokes

Introduced and read first time: July 13, 2020

Assigned to: Health Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Police Department, Health Department, Fire Department, Mayor's Office of Human Services

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Responding to Mental Health Crises**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore
4 City Health Department, the Baltimore City Fire Department, Mayor's Office of Human
5 Services, Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc., the 911 Call
6 Center, and advocates of mental health to investigate how behavioral and mental health crises
7 are handled, identify gaps, and develop the best path forward for addressing and de-escalating
8 crises.

9 **Recitals**

10 In light of recent events that have taken place across the U.S. and Baltimore, we must
11 reexamine our response to behavioral and mental health crises. We seek to decriminalize mental
12 health challenges. Too often, we have asked police officers to solve issues that they are ill
13 equipped to handle. Police are not clinicians. Mental health issues like schizophrenia and
14 addiction require a mental health response led by mental health professionals. Law enforcement
15 has a role to play in responding to crises and supporting other professionals but sending police
16 alone can escalate tense situations and result in bad outcomes for everyone. We also know that
17 because of implicit bias and our legacy of racism, black and brown people experiencing mental
18 health crises are most at risk for negative interactions with law enforcement.

19 In Baltimore, there is a lack of clarity regarding how the 911 system handles mental and
20 behavioral health calls. Through this hearing we seek to illuminate how the various agencies and
21 nonprofits work together to reduce harm and provide support. Individuals experiencing a mental
22 health crisis should receive treatment from healthcare professionals and clinicians. They should
23 also receive aftercare and proper follow up.

24 As we experience both a local and national uprising, we must rethink every facet of public
25 safety by better incorporating mental health professionals and existing relationships within our
26 communities. We must also make sure our systems clearly communicate with each other.

27 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That the City
28 Council invites representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Health
29 Department, the Baltimore City Fire Department, Mayor's Office of Human Services, Behavioral

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

Council Bill 20-0239R

1 Health System Baltimore, Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc., the 911 Call Center, and advocates of
2 mental health to investigate how behavioral and mental health crises are handled, identify gaps,
3 and develop the best path forward for addressing and de-escalating crises.

4 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
5 Police Commissioner, the Health Commissioner, the Fire Chief, the Director of the Mayor's
6 Office of Human Services, the President and CEO of Behavioral Health System Baltimore, the
7 Executive Director of Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc., and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the
8 City Council.