

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 13-0096R  
(Resolution)**

---

Introduced by: Councilmembers Henry, Kraft, Mosby, Scott  
Introduced and adopted: March 4, 2013

---

**A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING**

**In Support of State Legislation – Food Service Facilities Letter Grading**

FOR the purpose of supporting the passage and enactment of HB 1217, or similar legislation, to establish a statewide letter grading system for health inspections of food service facilities.

**Recitals**

House Bill 1217, currently pending in the General Assembly, would align Maryland with a growing national trend by requiring food service facilities, such as restaurants and food trucks, to post letter grades indicating their degree of compliance with health and sanitation laws.

This type of requirement improves transparency for consumers, allowing clean establishments to take full advantage of their investments in sanitation as a competitive advantage over corner-cutting competitors. Required grade posting therefore provides a stronger incentive to keep cleanliness levels as high as possible rather than accepting occasional unpublicized fines as simply a cost of doing business that unsavory establishments can balance against the cost of complying with health regulations, often to the public’s detriment.

For these reasons, Baltimore is currently considering implementing an inspection grade posting system of its own. However, concerns have been raised about costs of developing and administering the proposed system, as well as the possibility that Baltimore businesses could be disadvantaged if neighboring jurisdictions adopted a more lenient grading system, or none at all. Although these concerns may not outweigh the benefits that a grading system would bring, eliminating or reducing them would be preferable; and implementing this reform at the State level would address both of these concerns for all Maryland jurisdictions.

According to a Department of Legislative Services analysis, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene could “likely use existing budgeted resources to establish the grading system and develop the required grading card and signage”. At no cost to taxpayers, this would remove the need for local health departments to spend resources developing the program, and eliminate the possibility of wasteful duplication of effort if each had to independently develop its own system. Also, by implementing the program statewide, we can be assured that unscrupulous establishments cannot gain any advantage by locating in jurisdictions where they would not be graded. A statewide program would have the added benefit of reassuring consumers dining in different jurisdictions that all establishments are being held to the same standards and are equally safe to eat at.

A grading system for health inspections of food service facilities has real advantages for both Baltimore and all of Maryland. Implementing such a system on a statewide level would improve its efficiency and maximize its benefits.

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

**Council Bill 13-0096R**

1       **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That the  
2 Council supports the passage and enactment of HB 1217, or similar legislation, to establish a  
3 statewide letter grading system for health inspections of food service facilities.

4       **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Honorable  
5 Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the Maryland  
6 General Assembly, the Mayor, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.