

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 15-0275R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmembers Henry, Costello, Middleton, Stokes, Kraft, Branch, Scott,
Clarke, Welch, Curran, Mosby, Reisinger

Introduced and read first time: November 9, 2015

Assigned to: Housing and Community Development Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Health Department, Mayor's Office of
Human Services, Deputy Mayor for Health, Human Services, Education, and Youth, Mayor's
Office of Human Services/Homeless Services Program, Executive Director of the Journey Home

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **“There’s a Better Way” to Assist Homeless**

3 FOR the purpose of encouraging the Administration to examine how best to incorporate elements
4 of Albuquerque, New Mexico’s “There’s a Better Way” program to assist homeless
5 individuals with work and support into Baltimore’s efforts to make homelessness a rare and
6 brief experience.

7 **Recitals**

8 Like Baltimore, cities across the United States struggle to address the interrelated problems
9 of providing services and support to homeless individuals and mitigating the safety concerns
10 caused by panhandling on active roads. In Albuquerque, New Mexico, the city is experimenting
11 with an innovative new approach to these concerns that could provide a valuable model to other
12 communities, including Baltimore.

13 The Albuquerque program, dubbed “There’s a Better Way” by local officials, has 3 main
14 elements. It includes efforts to connect the city’s homeless with care providers and to get
15 commuters and other concerned citizens to donate directly to a coalition of care providers rather
16 than to give money to panhandlers engaging in dangerous collection efforts in traffic. The third,
17 and perhaps most intriguing, element is an effort to provide homeless individuals and
18 panhandlers with opportunities for a day of paid work on beautification projects.

19 The daywork element involves an employee with a van from a local homeless services
20 organization driving around to areas known to have homeless populations and panhandlers and
21 asking homeless people if they want to work for the day. If they say yes, they are immediately
22 picked up and given lunch in the van, then driven to a beautification project for a 5.5 hour work
23 shift paying \$9/hour. At the end of the shift, the participants are driven to a location where
24 numerous shelter, food, and other support services are available and given an opportunity to take
25 advantage of these services if they choose.

26 “As a mayor, you want to be effective, and you want to do it in a way that’s compassionate.
27 And you also want to do it in a way that really maybe helps people get out of the circumstances
28 that they’re in,” Albuquerque Mayor Richard Berry said of the program. “We want to give the

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

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1 dignity of work for a day. The dignity of a day’s work for a day’s pay is a very good thing. It
2 helps people stabilize, it helps them with their self-confidence, and it helps them get back on
3 their feet.”

4 The “There’s a Better Way” program has only been in place for a few months in
5 Albuquerque, so the data on its effectiveness is limited, but early results are encouraging enough
6 that the city is looking to expand the program to 5 day a week service. This is an innovative
7 approach that deserves more exploration and consideration here in Baltimore. The differences
8 between Albuquerque and Baltimore mean that the program will likely need to be adjusted
9 somewhat to be effective here, but adding something like it to our toolbox, for assisting the
10 homeless, could be invaluable.

11 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
12 Council encourages the Administration to examine how best to incorporate elements of
13 Albuquerque, New Mexico’s “There’s a Better Way” program to assist homeless individuals
14 with work and support into Baltimore’s efforts to make homelessness a rare and brief experience.

15 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
16 Deputy Mayor for Health, Human Services, Education, and Youth, the Director of the Mayor’s
17 Office of Human Services, the Director of the Mayor’s Office of Human Services’ Homeless
18 Services Program, the Executive Director of the Journey Home, the Health Commissioner, the
19 City Solicitor, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.