

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 14-0169R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmember Scott, President Young, Councilmembers Holton, Kraft, Stokes,
Mosby, Middleton, Branch, Henry, Clarke, Reisinger, Curran, Cole, Spector

Introduced and read first time: April 7, 2014

Assigned to: Education and Youth Committee and Public Safety Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Youth Commission

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Giving Youth a Voice in Community Decisions**

3 FOR the purpose of calling on all neighborhood community associations to make a greater effort
4 to involve young people in their discussions by including at least one youth representative on
5 their executive boards.

6 **Recitals**

7 Baltimore's many community associations play an important role in organizing
8 neighborhoods and providing a forum where residents can reach a consensus on the issues most
9 relevant to their part of the city. Input from these associations is extremely important to officials
10 throughout City government who must make decisions that will impact neighborhoods for years
11 to come.

12 Community associations are most successful when they reflect the entirety of their
13 neighborhoods in all their diversity and give everyone a voice. And yet, many community
14 associations have no formal way for young people to participate in their discussions. In fact,
15 many associations specifically exclude minors from membership in their bylaws and make no
16 effort to offer an alternative way for them to be heard.

17 The absence of youth voices in community association deliberations is especially troubling
18 because many times these associations are tasked with debating issues that will specifically
19 impact young people. Even when a discussion doesn't touch on youth-specific issues, decisions
20 about long term priorities could benefit from the perspective of those young residents who will
21 be living with the results of a decision the longest.

22 At the City level, government has recognized the importance of giving youth an opportunity
23 to weigh in on the issues most important to them by establishing the Baltimore City Youth
24 Commission. Neighborhoods could benefit from this example by making a greater effort to
25 involve their young people in the critical decisions facing their immediate communities. At the
26 very least, all neighborhood community associations should include one youth on their executive
27 board to ensure that young people's perspectives are represented.

28 Baltimore's young people are far too important to our city's future to be left voiceless. In the
29 long run they will inherit the results, good and bad, of the decisions made today, and they deserve

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

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1 a role in making those decisions. We must always be preparing and nurturing our next
2 generation of leaders. More than that, many may be surprised by what young people can
3 accomplish today when, rather than being told to wait their turn while their elders make decisions
4 for them without their input, they are engaged and given the chance to focus the energy of youth
5 on the problems in their communities.

6 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
7 Council calls on all neighborhood community associations to make a greater effort to involve
8 young people in their discussions by including at least one youth representative on their
9 executive boards.

10 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
11 Chair of the Baltimore City Youth Commission, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City
12 Council.