

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 18-0090R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Clarke, Henry, Burnett, Bullock

Introduced and read first time: June 25, 2018

Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Police Department, Board of Liquor License Commissioners

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Investigative Hearing – Baltimore City Board of Liquor License Commissioners**

3 FOR the purpose of calling upon the Board of Liquor License Commissioners for Baltimore City  
4 (BLLC) to prepare for and participate in a requested public hearing on the crucial issues  
5 raised by a coalition of North and Northeast Baltimore City community associations,  
6 including the need for improved Police Department-BLLC interagency communications and  
7 joint enforcement efforts to terminate Baltimore City liquor license establishments violating  
8 the safety and wellbeing of the neighborhoods where they are located.

9 **Recitals**

10 **WHEREAS**, a coalition of North and Northeast Baltimore City community associations have  
11 called upon the Baltimore City Council to schedule “a public hearing to hold accountable the  
12 commissioners and staff of the Board of Liquor License Commissioners for Baltimore City  
13 (BLLC)”.

14 **WHEREAS**, petitioning neighborhoods include Waverly Improvement Association,  
15 Oakenshawe Improvement Association, The Guilford Association, Abell Improvement  
16 Association, Charles Village Civic Association, Better Waverly Improvement Association,  
17 Winston-Govans Improvement Association, The Ednor Gardens-Lakeside Civic Association  
18 Board.

19 **WHEREAS**, these neighborhoods are joined as signatories by Karen DeCamp, Director of  
20 Community Programs, and Karen Stokes, Chief Executive Officer, Strong City Baltimore;  
21 Barbara & Hank Valieri, Baltimore Good Neighbors Coalition; State Senator Joan Carter  
22 Conway and State Delegates Maggie McIntosh and Mary Washington, and Baltimore City  
23 Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke.

24 **WHEREAS**, these petitioners call for a City Council hearing because, although the BLLC is a  
25 State agency, the commissioners are appointed by the Mayor and the City Council President, and  
26 its staff are Civil Service employees of Baltimore City.

27 **WHEREAS**, The stated reason for this widespread and deeply-felt petition is that “the BLLC  
28 has failed Baltimore communities.”

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

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- 1 • “First, the BLLC has failed to set up efficient and effective systems of communication  
2 with the Baltimore Police Department (BPD)”; and,
- 3 • “Second, the BLLC has failed communities by insisting that communities engage in  
4 time-consuming and burdensome mediation with licensees; rather, the BLLC should use  
5 its own powers of enforcement and regulation to improve public health”.

6 **WHEREAS**, regarding a failure of effective communication with the BPD, petitioners state  
7 that “Interagency BLLC-BPD cooperation almost exclusively focuses on joint underage drinking  
8 investigations with the BPD’s Vice Unit. Unfortunately, because of this exclusive focus,  
9 complaints regarding violence, drug dealing, and other serious public health and safety concerns  
10 at liquor-licensed establishments do not make it before the commissioners for violation  
11 hearings”.

12 **WHEREAS**, also because of this focus, petitioners observe, “The Board prioritizes 311  
13 complaints over 911 complaints, creating a perverse system in which the Board is more likely to  
14 hold a violation hearing for minor nuisance issues than for dangerous crimes”.

15 **WHEREAS**, regarding the second objection to mediation in lieu of enforcement, petitioners  
16 acknowledge the sometimes useful function of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), under the  
17 right circumstances, between communities and licensees. But mediation should not serve as a  
18 BLLC substitute for enforcement, especially regarding licensees documented and testified by  
19 BPD as a threat to public safety.

20 **WHEREAS**, by way of example, petitioners compare the BLLC’s mediation default to the  
21 response of other agencies to public safety violations noting that:

22 “When a Health Department inspector discovers improper food storage at a restaurant, or if a  
23 fire inspector notices that a business's emergency exit is blocked, they do not require the  
24 closest community association to meet with the owner for mediation to talk about their  
25 frustration about the problem. Instead, they issue a violation notice and/or shut the business  
26 down. In contrast, when communities approach the Liquor Board to complain that a BD-7  
27 tavern owner is allowing drug transactions to take place in his store or giving out plastic cups  
28 so that its patrons can drink in public on the front steps of the building, the BLLC repeatedly  
29 suggests mediation and MOUs and does nothing to address the problem.”

30 **WHEREAS**, the petition states, “Like the Health Department and the Fire Department, the  
31 BLLC also exists to promote public health.”.

32 **WHEREAS**, the Council shares this expectation, and joins with petitioners in calling upon the  
33 BLLC to use its authority and inspection services “for the protection, health, welfare, and safety  
34 of the people” as required by state law and the wellbeing of communities and liquor license  
35 establishments in Baltimore City.

36 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, that the  
37 Council calls upon the Board of Liquor License Commissioners for Baltimore City (BLLC) to  
38 prepare for and participate in a requested public hearing on the crucial issues raised by a coalition  
39 of North and Northeast Baltimore City community associations, including the need for improved  
40 Police Department-BLLC interagency communications and joint enforcement efforts to terminate

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1 Baltimore City liquor license establishments violating the safety and wellbeing of the  
2 neighborhoods where they are located.

3 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor; the  
4 Director and Commissioners of the Baltimore Liquor License Commission; the Police  
5 Commissioner; the Commander of the Northern Police District; the Presidents and Co-Presidents  
6 of the Waverly Improvement Association, Oakenshawe Improvement Association, Guilford  
7 Association, Abell Improvement Association, Charles Village Civic Association, Better Waverly  
8 Improvement Association, Winston-Govans Improvement Association, and Ednor  
9 Gardens/Lakeside Civic Association; the CEO and Director of Community Programs for Strong  
10 City Baltimore; Representatives of Baltimore Good Neighbors Coalition; the Senator and  
11 Delegates, 43rd Legislative District; the City Solicitor; and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the  
12 City Council.