

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 07-0279R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Holton, Young, Kraft, Middleton, Welch, Reisinger, Mitchell  
Introduced and read first time: March 26, 2007

Assigned to: Education, Housing, Health, and Human Resources Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Finance, Baltimore City Public School System

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **In Support of State Legislation – House Bill 540 - Education - Laptop Computer**  
3 **Distribution Program**

4 FOR the purpose of expressing support for this legislation that establishes a program in the  
5 Department of Education to work with each county to provide laptop computers to every 7<sup>th</sup>  
6 grader enrolled in public school if participation in the program would not be a fiscal hardship  
7 to the subdivision; urging the Honorable Chair and Members of the House Ways and Means  
8 Committee to give the bill a favorable report; requesting the Honorable Chair and Members  
9 of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly to  
10 secure passage of HB 540; and petitioning the Governor to sign the bill into law.

11 **Recitals**

12 In February 2000, the Baltimore City Council adopted C.C. 00-0049 – **Baltimore City**  
13 **Digital Divide Summit** – for the purpose of convening a summit to determine the extent of the  
14 digital divide in the Baltimore City Public Schools and homes, to identify strategies to address  
15 the technological disparities, to pinpoint public and private resources available to aid in bridging  
16 the gap, and to form partnerships among government agencies, private industry, community  
17 groups, churches, and individuals to disseminate economic, educational, and hardware resources  
18 to enable all Baltimore City children to attain technological proficiency in the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup>  
19 century.

20 The Resolution was proposed to address the disparity, between households and persons who  
21 have access to state-of-the-art technology and those who do not, that is causing great concern  
22 about a growing “digital divide”. Groups that were already connected are now far more  
23 connected, while those with lower connectivity rates to modern technology, particularly access  
24 to the computer and the Internet, have lagged behind. As a result, the gap between information  
25 “haves” and “have nots” is continuing to grow.

26 At that time a report by the Department of Commerce National Telecommunication and  
27 Information Administration cited the following examples that highlighted the breadth of the  
28 digital divide:

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

**Council Bill 07-0279R**

- 1 (1) Those with a college degree are more than 8 times as likely to have a computer at  
2 home and nearly 16 times as likely to have home Internet access, as those with an  
3 elementary school education.
- 4 (2) A high-income household in an urban area is more than 20 times as likely as a rural,  
5 low-income household to have Internet access.
- 6 (3) A child in a low-income White family is 3 times as likely to have Internet access as a  
7 child in a comparable Black family and 4 times as likely to have access as children in  
8 a comparable Hispanic household.
- 9 (4) A wealthy household of Asian/ Pacific Islander descent is nearly 13 times as likely to  
10 own a computer as a poor Black household and nearly 34 times as likely to have  
11 Internet access.
- 12 (5) A child in a dual parent White household is nearly twice as likely to have Internet  
13 access as a child in a White single-parent household, while a child in a dual-parent  
14 Black family is almost 4 times as likely to have access as a child in a single parent  
15 Black household.

16 These statistics demonstrate the breadth of the digital divide. The children of Baltimore City,  
17 who live in an urban environment that reflects many of the demographics used in the  
18 comparisons, will fall into the cavern of technological incapability if we do not address these  
19 shortcomings now. We must ensure that all Baltimore City children are provided with access to  
20 technology, whether in the home, public libraries, schools, churches, or community centers, so  
21 that they will be able to stand equal with their peers in this age of electronic communication.

22 The lack of access to technology among Baltimore’s children that led to the introduction of  
23 the subject resolution, in 2000, still exists to date. Passage of this legislation would secure for  
24 those on the wrong side of the digital divide the tools with which to bridge that gap and to secure  
25 for themselves, their families, and their communities a brighter and more productive future.

26 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That this  
27 Body supports passage of this legislation that establishes a program in the Department of  
28 Education to work with each county to provide laptop computers to every 7<sup>th</sup> grader enrolled in  
29 public school if participation in the program would not be a fiscal hardship to the subdivision;  
30 urges the Honorable Chair and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee to give the  
31 bill a favorable report; requests the Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City Senate  
32 and House Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly to secure passage of HB 540; and  
33 petitions the Governor to sign the bill into law.

34 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the  
35 Mayor, the Honorable Chair and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee, the  
36 Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the  
37 Maryland General Assembly, the Honorable Jeannie Haddaway, the Executive Director of the  
38 Mayor’s Office of State Relations, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.