

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 17-0004R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmembers Costello, Middleton, Schleifer, Clarke, President Young,
Councilmembers Burnett, Dorsey, Pinkett, Bullock, Henry, Cohen, Stokes, Sneed, Scott
Introduced and read first time: January 9, 2017
Assigned to: Budget and Appropriations Committee

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

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Budget Oversight Hearings for Baltimore City Public Schools**

3 FOR the purpose of calling for regular budget oversight hearings for Baltimore City Public
4 Schools to improve transparency and accountability in the allocation of over a billion dollars
5 in public funding for the vital task of educating Baltimore's children.

6 **Recitals**

7 Each year the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners independently assembles a
8 roughly \$1.3 billion budget for Baltimore City Public Schools. And each year the City Council is
9 required to vote to approve this budget. Furthermore, Baltimore City Public Schools is facing a
10 \$129 million deficit in fiscal year 2018.

11 However, the Council, and through it the public, is often provided with very little meaningful
12 information about this huge and vitally important expenditure. Even more troubling, the budget
13 information that is provided to the Council is sometimes unclear or misleading.

14 Educating our community's children is one of the most important tasks imaginable. It
15 requires, and deserves, the mobilization of vast resources from all levels of government and the
16 private sector. It also requires, and deserves, genuine transparency and accountability in the
17 process of allocating those resources. The current school budget process doesn't do enough to
18 advance those values and must be updated to allow the City Council to be informed and engaged
19 in reviewing budget decisions on behalf of Baltimore's citizens.

20 Instead of simply being handed a document full of numbers to approve once a year with
21 complex explanations and insufficient time to fully vet, the Council should be involved year
22 round in the decisions about how to best make use of the City's limited resources to effectively
23 educate our children. Regular hearings about budget priorities should be held before the Council
24 throughout the year bringing together school officials, parents, teachers, and other education
25 stakeholders for robust and meaningful discussions about how we can best help our children to
26 achieve all they are capable of.

27 Regularly hosting these kinds of discussions would allow the Council to more effectively
28 consider the annual school budget with the interests of all Baltimoreans in mind. They would

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

Council Bill 17-0004R

1 also provide BCPS officials with an opportunity to better respond to the concerns of their
2 community when making the many decisions that are embodied in the annual budget.

3 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
4 Council calls for regular budget oversight hearings for Baltimore City Public Schools to improve
5 transparency and accountability in the allocation of over a billion dollars in public funding for the
6 vital task of educating Baltimore’s children.

7 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
8 CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, the Chair of the Baltimore City Board of School
9 Commissioners, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.