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**BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT  
COMMITTEE**

*Mission Statement*

On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the mission of the **Public Health and Environment Committee** is dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of Baltimore's residents by advancing policies that promote health equity, environmental justice, and sustainability. Recognizing the deep connection between public health and the environment, the committee works to reduce health disparities, improve access to essential services, and address climate-related challenges that impact communities.

**The Honorable Phylicia Porter  
Chair**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2026  
10:00 AM**

**COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**RECONVENING HEARING**

*Legislative Oversight #LO25-0024*

**Oversight of Recovery Homes and Substance Abuse  
Clincs in Baltimore City**

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*Staff: Ethan Navarre (Ethan.Navarre@baltimorecity.gov)*

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# CITY OF BALTIMORE

Brandon M. Scott – Mayor  
Zeke Cohen – Council President



## Office of Council Services

Nancy Mead - Director  
100 Holliday Street, Room 415  
Baltimore, MD 21202

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### BILL SYNOPSIS

**Committee: Public Health and Environment**

**Legislative Oversight: LO25-0024**

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#### Oversight of Recovery Homes and Substance Abuse Clinics in Baltimore City

#### **RECONVENING HEARING**

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**Sponsor:** *Councilmembers Porter, et al*

**Introduced:** *June 16, 2025*

**Purpose:**

**For the purpose** of ensuring that individuals in recovery have access to high-quality, safe, and well-regulated recovery homes and substance abuse clinics is critical. To evaluate existing policies, assess provider accountability, and explore opportunities to enhance support systems for individuals in recovery. The discussion will prioritize community concerns, patient safety, and equitable distribution of recovery resources across the city.

Effective: Upon enactment.

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#### **Agencies, Partners and/or Organizations that have been invited:**

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore</li><li>• Department of Housing and Community Development</li></ul> |
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### Analysis

#### Background

On Wednesday, July 30, 2025, the committee held its first hearing on this legislative topic. Following are notes from the hearing:

#### Major Speakers

- Dan Rabbitt, Behavioral Health Systems – Baltimore
  - Kim Wireman, Powell Recovery Center, Inc.
  - **Public Testimony/Speakers**
    - Lisa Hodges-Hiken, Westport CEDC
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- Christine Flowers, Minister
- Nick Thieve, Speaker
- Melissa Vale, Sinai Hospital
- Dr. Ocelia Pearsall, New Life Recovery Center
- Yolanda Pulley, People Empowered by the Struggle (PEBTS)

## Major Issues Discussed

1. Chairwoman Porter gave opening remarks and stated, “We need an all-hands-on deck approach. This is the opportunity to have a conversation regarding the quality of services provided.”
2. Vice President Middleton also gave opening remarks and stated, “This is one of the most important issues to start conversations about! We must strengthen community trust.” Other topics of her discussion included:
  - The importance of having adequate clinics for recovery
  - We want a more resilient society!
  - Talked about the demographics of the 6<sup>th</sup> district – stating there are a lot of middle-class residents living there
  - As a result of the new laws, whereas the city had to accept group homes, the community associations became closer together!
  - She talked about some of the new organizations and stated, “there were drastic changes in the community as a result of the new organizations.
  - Talked about the impact that “deaths and addiction” have in families; affects a lot of families, she said.
    - Drug addiction is a disease, and it is affecting everyone!
  - Oversight is so, so important, she said!
    - There are some bad clinics out there!
    - The importance of educating the community
    - We must learn where the clinics are in order to manage our district(s)
    - Talked about the role of the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (BMZA)
3. President Zeke Cohen also gave opening remarks and stated, “We appreciate these series of hearings! This is a very complex issue to wrap our arms around! We cannot incarcerate our way out of this issue. We must wrap our arms around this issue! Other topics of discussion included:
  - Comments regarding “Predatory Businesses”
  - The importance of having residents living and thriving in the city.
4. Public Testimony was held (approximately six [6] speakers). Some comments, topics of discussion and/or concerns were:
  - Concerns:
    - Open air drug market in Westport – is of concern and is mainly coming from people living in surrounding counties!
      - It affects the quality of life for residents!
    - Must make sure funding goes where it is needed! The right way through oversight!
    - We need better partnerships, collaboration, solutions and outcomes!
  - Comments:
    - Much prayer is needed!
    - Some clinics are exploiting their clients!
      - Those clinics must be investigated and shut down!
    - This is not just an agency(s) issue but an issue for the city as well.
    - Is a homeless specialist
      - Knows how “deep” this issue goes!

- There are challenges being homeless while getting treatment.
  - We need our “boots” on the ground to confront this issue!
  - Importance of data sharing
  - Importance of outreach
  - The representative from Sinai Hospital stated that she was in attendance to share information about their program at the hospital. She talked about:
    - Makeup of customers
      - Age, race, etc.
      - Importance of meeting people where they are
      - Accessibility of services is crucial!
      - The goal is - making the best decisions possible!
5. Each representative from both the Behavioral Health Administration Baltimore and the Powell Recovery Center, Inc. gave a PowerPoint Presentation. **Copies are on file.**
6. Committee/council members asked questions, stated concerns, and made comments. Some highlighted topics of discussion, comments and/concerns were:
- Equity and Quality
    - Chairwoman Porter explained why she asked Ms. Wireman to submit some recommendations
    - A committee member thanks Ms. Wireman for the recommendations and stated, “We want to make sure people on the front line are doing and/or is providing adequate services.”
  - Recovery Homes – must be licensed
    - Health and safety standards in those homes are very important!
      - Oversight
        - Explain what is certified versus non-certified – **Requested by Committee member Ramos: please submit the answer in writing.**
      - Concerns:
        - Clients get the proper services needed
        - Adequate licensing for all treatment centers
  - Clients Served
    - Do you have data for how many of the clients served in the city are actually city residents?
    - Do we have a sense of services the city is providing for clients living in surrounding counties?
    - **Requested by Councilmember Zac Blanchard: Provide a breakdown of the number of clients being served in city who live in the surrounding counties.**
  - Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Clinics
    - Talk about the programs you provide and how it fits into communities
    - Talk about community engagement and consideration
    - Language barriers
      - What barriers have you seen for getting treatment for the immigrant community?
  - Oversight – Bad and/or Illegal Clinics
    - Concern: There is a deep need for services in the City but a “quality of services provided” issue which makes drug issues worse. We don’t mind if quality clinics are opening within community! Most clients don’t know a good vs. bad clinic!
    - Concern: Below standard clinics and addressing those illegal facilities
      - We must look into how the Council can help constituents in his/her district!

- Having a clinic half block from an open-air drug market is not good!
- There are not enough penalties for not being certified!
- Those type clinics are “allowable but not desirable!”
- What is considered an uncertified recovery home?
- Suggestion: Would it be helpful if we (the community) begin collecting data on these illegal clinics? **Answer: Yes**

7. Chairwoman Porter gave closing remarks, “We must transform people to healing! This issue touches so many and it will take all of us to assist!” Hearing recessed.

### **Further Study**

Was further study requested? Yes. See highlights above in “red.”

On Wednesday, April 29, 2026, the committee will reconvene the hearing.

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### **Additional Information**

**Fiscal Note:** None

**Information Source(s):** Notes taken during July 30, 2025, committee hearing.

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*Marguerite Currin*

Analysis by: Marguerite Currin  
Analysis Date: April 27, 2026

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**PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**LO25-0024**

**AGENCY REPORTS  
AND/OR  
HANDOUTS**

**NONE AS OF THIS WRITING**

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**LO25-0024**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**NONE RECEIVED AS OF THIS  
WRITING**