

FROM	NAME & TITLE	Rudolph S. Chow, P.E. Director	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of Public Works 600 Abel Wolman Municipal Building		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill 19-0410		

August 28, 2019

TO:

Health Committee

INTRODUCTION

I am herein reporting on City Council Bill 19-0410 introduced by Council Members Cohen, Clarke, President Scott, Council Members Dorsey, Henry, Burnett, Schleifer, Sneed, Bullock, McCray, Stokes, Reisinger, Pinkett, and Costello.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Bill is to, among other things, establish the Trauma-Informed Care Task Force and its membership and duties, including submitting an annual report to the Mayor and City Council regarding reorienting certain city services to focus on trauma-informed care; require certain agencies to designate individuals for trauma-informed training, perform certain duties to ensure services are delivered in a manner consistent with trauma-informed best practices, and submit periodic progress reports to the Task Force; make leading a citywide trauma-responsive and trauma-informed delivery of services initiative a primary duty of the Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success; and generally relating to providing trauma-informed services to the citizens of Baltimore.

BRIEF HISTORY

Ordinance 18-160 requires agencies to develop, adopt and oversee an Equity Assessment Program that will identify structural and institutional discrimination that may be present in existing policies, procedures and investment strategies; and to create an equity action plan that agencies will use to reverse the effects of disparity trends by applying equity principals and strategies to the agencies' operations, programs, services, and policies.

City Council Bill 19-0410 similarly proposes to establish a Baltimore City Trauma-Informed Care Task Force and to require agencies to provide two employees with annual, formal trauma-informed care training who will assist with assessing their agency's policies, procedures and programs and make appropriate recommendations to the agency head via a trauma-intensive approach. The Task Force is to help identify City programs and services that impact children and youth and to assist in developing a citywide strategy to facilitate a shift toward trauma-responsive government. The Office of Children and Family Success is to staff the Task Force as well as prioritize the trauma-responsive and trauma-informed delivery of City services which impact children, youth and families. On or before March 31 of each year, agency heads are to submit a report to the Task Force detailing progress toward and compliance with the citywide trauma-informed care initiative. The Baltimore City Department of Health is to provide technical and advisory support to designated agency staff to help them carry out their duties.

According to the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health, being a trauma-informed organization is an approach that "...recognizes the pervasiveness and impact of trauma on survivors, staff, organizations, and communities, and ensures this understanding is incorporated into every aspect of an organization's administration, culture, environment, and service delivery."¹ While most trauma-responsive and trauma-informed training and certifications are focused on the health, social work and education professions, this legislation seeks to establish a means for a broad range of city agencies to recognize and embrace the expansion of this field into the principles of social justice. The Baltimore City Trauma-Informed Care Task Force would, of necessity, have to play a strong guidance role with participating agencies in order to assure that positive outcomes will result.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Bill, as written, is focused primarily on children and youth, seemingly to the exclusion of adults. Recent demographics reveal that there are 200,000 male and female children and youth who just by their age (24 years and younger), could be subject to the provisions of this legislation. This cohort alone comprises almost one third of the City's population.² Defining the boundaries and capacities of this trauma-responsive and trauma-informed initiative may be the most difficult for the Task Force and Office of Children and Family Success to define. Each agency is required to dedicate two employees to receive annual trauma-informed training, to have those employees assist with assessing and making recommendations on how the agency may become a more trauma-responsive entity, and to interact with other fellow agency appointees in work sessions and informal trainings as organized by the Baltimore City Department of Health. Agencies would also be required to provide annual reporting on its progress toward becoming more trauma-informed in its practices. It is assumed that translating this approach into the internal workings of an agency such as the Department of Public Works would require an agency-wide scope and depth of commitment similar to the work currently underway to develop the agency's Equity Assessment Program. This level of effort will also be necessary if it is the intent of the trauma-responsive legislation to achieve the expected culture change over time in agency policies, programs and practices.

The Department of Public Works offers the following suggestions and questions in an effort to clarify the intent of the legislation:

- General comment – The Bill requires the appointment of a new task force; places a mandate on the Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success to prioritize trauma-responsive and trauma-informed delivery of City services, be an ex-officio member of the task force and staff the task force; requires the Department of Health to provide technical support and develop and perform training to agencies. Recognizing that these actions will take time to develop and implement, it is suggested that the City Council consider a phased in approach similar to that which was amended into Ordinance 18-160 (Equity Assessment Program).

¹ "Tools for Transformation: Becoming Accessible, Culturally Responsive, and Trauma-Informed Organizations – An Organizational Reflection Toolkit;" National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health; Carol Warshaw, MD, Erin Tinnon, MSW, and Cathy Cave; April 2018.

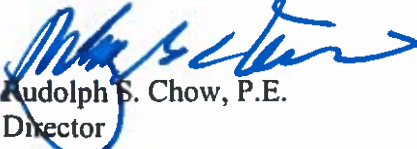
² Population Demographic for Baltimore, Maryland 2019

- Page 2, § 22-1 Definitions – Provide a clearly stated definition of “Trauma” and of “Families”. Defining Trauma is central to the interpretation and implementation of the Bill. In addition, the legislation focuses on children and youth, but rarely references families. In terms of this legislation, are families to include persons who are related biologically as well as those with legal authority, or does it include those who have assumed stewardship of a youth, without having a genetic or legal kinship?
- Page 2, § 22-11 (1) – States the intent is to identify the “...needs of children and youth according to age, location and special services...”, but there is no mention of families. Will the legislation focus on families and adults as well, or is it the intent to treat children independent of the family nexus?
- Page 2, § 22-11 (3) – States the purpose is to “...identify changes in public policy, service delivery and funding to improve the services available to children, youth and families;” however, the provisions in the legislation are weighted toward children, particularly when looking at the composition of the Task Force.
- Page 3, § 22-11 (8) – Suggest removing “generally” from this duty description as it appears to dilute the impact of the statement.
- Page 4, § 22-17 (B)(2) – The Bill references the appointment of two individuals, each of whom has at least one child enrolled in the Baltimore City Public School system, but does not provide a slot for a member of the Baltimore City Public Schools as a representative on the Task Force. Was this intentional, or a reflection of the City’s ability to legislatively compel a member of the School System to take a seat on the Task Force? Perhaps an alternative approach would be to share the findings of the annual reports with the Baltimore City Public School system by adding them as a recipient in § 22-22 (Page 8).
- Page 5, § 22-20 (2) – States that a “...citywide strategy toward an organizational culture shift...” should be developed by the Task Force, but defining what the expected cultural shift is or how it will be measured does not appear elsewhere in the legislation. Are the metrics mentioned in § 22-20 (3) expected to help measure the organizational culture shift?

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT POSITION

The Department of Public Works supports the intent of City Council Bill 19-0410 but respectfully asks the City Council to consider this agency’s questions and clarifying suggestions, as well as providing for a more realistic timeframe to establish an effective trauma-responsive program and agency compliance.

Should the Committee have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Marcia Collins at 410-396-1960, or via email at Marcia.Collins@baltimorecity.gov.


Rudolph S. Chow, P.E.
Director

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