

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 20-0211R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmember Cohen, President Scott, Councilmembers Henry, Middleton,  
Burnett, Bullock, Pinkett, McCray, Clarke, Sneed, Stokes, Dorsey  
Introduced and adopted: April 13, 2020

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**A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING**

**Closing the Digital Divide During the COVID-19 Crisis**

FOR the purpose of calling on the Baltimore City Government, the State of Maryland, and the Baltimore City Public School System to work together to make sure every student has access to technology to support online learning during the COVID-19 crisis and to support the short and long term employment needs of participants in Baltimore's YouthWorks program.

**Recitals**

**WHEREAS**, Technology and online learning tools are vitally important for the education and future employment of Baltimore's children, yet access to technology is deeply inequitably distributed across lines of race and class;

**WHEREAS**, Baltimore trails behind many cities when it comes to the number of households with home internet connections, with the 2013 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau ranking Baltimore 261 out of 296 cities surveyed. National research indicates that lower-income and racial minority households are disproportionately disconnected from the internet;

**WHEREAS**, According to the U.S. Census, approximately 30% of households in Baltimore have no internet access. Low-income communities and communities of color in Baltimore, in particular, lack access to adequate hardware, such as desktops, laptops, and electronic tablets;

**WHEREAS**, Regular access to devices at libraries and public schools is unavailable during this period of COVID-19 closures, removing the ability for individuals and families to access established systems of support to meet needs relating to education, employment, and social connectedness;

**WHEREAS**, More than 14,000 Baltimore youth between the ages of 14 and 21 applied for jobs through YouthWorks for the summer of 2020. Children in Baltimore rely on these summer jobs for work experience and a vital source of income for themselves and their families. This year Youthworks may be forced to convert to "telework" to promote the safety and technological skills of our youth;

**WHEREAS**, Starting on March 16, 2020, all Baltimore City Public Schools closed at the direction of the Maryland State Department of Education and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

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1       **WHEREAS**, On April 6, 2020, Baltimore City Public Schools began distance learning for all  
2 students with educational content broadcast on the City’s cable television access channels and  
3 posted online to the City schools website. Teachers began engaging students on a variety of  
4 online platforms to give live instruction and host class assignments and resources;

5       **WHEREAS**, On April 8, 2020, State Superintendent of Schools Karen B. Salmon indicated the  
6 possibility that public schools might remain closed into the 2020-2021 academic year.

7       **WHEREAS**, According to the MIT Task Force on the Work of the Future, providing students  
8 with online learning and teleworking capacities is critical to the future global economy. This  
9 need is further accelerated by COVID-19, particularly in areas like Baltimore that are most  
10 hamstrung by the digital divide;

11       **WHEREAS**, Parents, educators, students and community have all called on City leadership to  
12 address this immediate and pressing need. Organizations such as the Parent Community  
13 Advisory Board, the Baltimore Teachers Union, the Teacher Democracy Project, Baltimoreans  
14 for Educational Equity, and many other groups have expressed the need for immediate increased  
15 access to online learning.

16       **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That the City  
17 Council calls on the Baltimore City Government, the Baltimore City Public School System and  
18 the State of Maryland, to work together to make sure every student has access to technology to  
19 support online learning during the COVID-19 crisis and to support the short and long term  
20 employment needs of participants in Baltimore's YouthWorks program. This may include the  
21 one-time purchase of digital learning devices such as laptops or chrome books and the expansion  
22 of internet access to include all families in Baltimore City Public Schools.

23       **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Council calls for the reimbursement of monies  
24 spent on closing the digital divide to be reimbursed by the Federal Government.

25       **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the  
26 Mayor, the State Superintendent of Schools, the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, the  
27 Director of the Office of Employment Development, the Director of the Office of Children and  
28 Family Success, the Director of the Office of Immigrant Affairs, and the Mayor’s Legislative  
29 Liaison to the City Council.