

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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City Council Resolution 21-0017R Investigative Hearing - Arson and Fire Fatality Awareness: Re-instituting the Baltimore City Joint Agency Arson Task Force

July 7, 2021

Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) supports Council Resolution 21-0017R, which seeks to examine the cause and potential prevention of arsons, fire fatalities and injuries, and school fires, as well as to determine possibilities for reinstating the Joint Agency Arson Task Force.

City Schools takes fire prevention seriously, as the safety and well-being of City Schools students and staff continues to be our top priority. We remain committed to ensuring all our students feel connected to school learning environments that are safe and supportive and facilitate their ability to actively engage, thrive, and fulfil their tremendous potential. As such, we welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Baltimore City Fire Department and our sister agencies in order to explore the most appropriate and effective next steps for reducing fire risk.

By way of background, during the 2007/08 school year, the Baltimore City Fire Department recorded 153 fires in Baltimore City Public schools. On August 1, 2008 The School Fire Reduction Program was created and two detectives from City Schools Police were assigned to work with the Baltimore City Fire Department's Fire Investigation Bureau (FIB) and the Baltimore City Police's Arson Unit. As noted below, we experienced a steady reduction in the number of school fires during this time:

School Year	Number of Fires
2009/09	93
2009/10	61
2010/11	48
2011/12	22
2012/13	11

The Task Force was ultimately dissolved after a reduction of 92.8%. Some of the students identified during investigations were referred to the BCFD Fire Setters Intervention Program as a diversion program as an alternative to criminal prosecution.

Our efforts to further reduce the risk of fires in our schools are most evident in the data reflected below from the past five years.

**Baltimore City School Police Force
Recorded Fires**

Years	Building	Dumpster	Playground	Vehicle	Pulled Station	Accidental	# of Fires
2016	27	4	5	0	6	3	45
2017	36	4	4	1	6	10	61
2018	5	3	3	0	3	5	19
2019	17	2	5	1	2	1	28
2020	6	0	3	1	6	3	19

In closing, we appreciate the Baltimore City Council’s attention to Council Resolution 21-0017R and look forward to participating in further discussions regarding the potential reestablishment of the Joint Agency Arson Task Force.