

FROM	NAME & TITLE	Robert Cename, Budget Director <i>R. C. C.</i>	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Bureau of the Budget and Management Research Room 432, City Hall (410) 396-4774		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill 21-0103 – Suicide Prevention Coordinator		

DATE:

TO

The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400

September 14, 2021

Position: Oppose

The Department of Finance is herein reporting on City Council Bill 21-0103 – Suicide Prevention Coordinator, the purpose of which is to establish the position and duties of a Suicide Prevention Coordinator within the Baltimore City Health Department.

Background

Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States and has increased by 33% between 1999 and 2019¹, and over 15 million Americans have either seriously thought, planned, or attempted suicide in 2019². One strategy to suicide prevention is crisis prevention. This approach provides support and referral services, typically by connecting a person in crisis to trained volunteers or professional staff via telephone hotline, online chat, text messaging, or in-person. A crisis prevention hotline is the most common strategy used in Baltimore City and all other Maryland counties³, with the exception of Baltimore County, which uses a mobile crisis team along with their crisis hotline. Specially-trained police officers are paired with licensed mental health clinicians in an unmarked police car and wear plain clothes to provide on-site, emergency response to persons in need of crisis intervention.

Additionally, Baltimore City is currently conducting a 911 Diversion Pilot, which diverts 911 calls from individuals with suicidal ideation to trained staff from Baltimore Crisis Response Inc., a vendor contracted with the Behavioral Health System Baltimore.

Fiscal Impact

The Fiscal 2022 Baltimore City Health budget does not have General Funds appropriated to create a new Suicide Prevention Coordinator position. Based on a comparable Maryland State Suicide Prevention Coordinator position⁴, this position creation would cost approximately \$81,500 (\$54,080 salary + \$27,365 OPCs). To make this new position budget neutral, the Health Department would be required to identify an offset in their existing General Fund budget.

¹ [Preventing Suicide \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/prevention/10-leading-causes-of-death)

² Ibid.

³ [Suicide Prevention Program \(maryland.gov\)](https://www.maryland.gov/health/suicide-prevention-program)

⁴ [Job Announcement: ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER III \(SUICIDE PREVENTION COORDINATOR\) - State of Maryland \(jobapscloud.com\)](https://www.jobapscloud.com/job-announcement-administrative-officer-iii-suicide-prevention-coordinator-state-of-maryland)

Conclusion

In Fiscal 2022, the City continues to face major fiscal concerns, and the Health Department has dedicated much of its staff and resources to the COVID-19 pandemic response. Therefore, the City cannot presently support the implementation of a new position with General Fund dollars without utilizing resources from other essential services.

For the reasons stated above, the Department of Finance opposes City Council Bill 21-0103.

cc: Henry Raymond
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