

FROM	NAME & TITLE	Robert Cename, Budget Director <i>BaltAC</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 21-0094 – Public Safety Apprenticeship Program – Establishment (Hometown Heroes Act)		

DATE:

TO

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

October 12, 2021

Position: Oppose

The Department of Finance is herein reporting on City Council Bill 21-0094, Public Safety Apprenticeship Program – Establishment (Hometown Heroes Act), the purpose of which is to establish a public safety apprenticeship program that will be managed by the Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD) in partnership with other public safety agencies in Baltimore City.

Background

The proposed legislation seeks to establish a public safety apprenticeship program with three distinct pathways: the Public Safety Explorers Post, the Public Safety Internship, and the Public Safety Cadet Post.

Under this measure, the Public Safety Explorers Post will expose youth in Baltimore City to public safety careers, serve as a recruitment tool for future public safety positions, build community relationships, and provide a conduit for mentorship opportunities for public safety personnel. The Public Safety Internship will provide participants with the opportunity to take part in an eight to ten-week paid summer internship with a public safety agency. The curriculum for this internship will be developed and implemented by the BCFD in partnership with the other agencies. The Public Safety Cadet Post will provide eligible individuals the opportunity to be hired by a public safety agency in the career track of their choice, law enforcement or fire and emergency medical services, and receive on the job training for a period of no more than three years. In addition, this legislation requires the City to hire 50 young adults as part of the Cadet Post.

Fiscal Impact

While the Department of Finance agrees with the spirit and intent of this measure to support recruitment of local talent for public safety positions, Finance is opposed to this measure in its current form for several reasons.

First, this measure may be duplicative of existing youth recruitment programs and have additional new programmatic costs. Currently, BCFD and the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) both run a variety of youth engagement and recruitment programs based on agency needs. These programs have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but both agencies are working to maintain partnerships and continue outreach under the various health and social distancing restrictions.

BCFD runs two summer camp programs, Camp Spark and Youth Fire and Life Safety Summer Camp, which engage youth from ages 8 to 16 and teach a variety of fire safety and team-building skills, as well as introduce them to careers in fire and emergency medical services. BCFD also has a partnership with

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) and has established a career and technical education program for emergency medical technician and firefighter positions, which is in the process of being restructured, at four local high schools—Vivien T. Thomas Medical Arts Academy, Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, Patterson High School, and Frederick Douglas High School.

BPD also has several engagement and recruitment efforts that provide a pathway to becoming a Police Officer Trainee, which has a minimum age requirement of 20½ years old. BPD's Cadet program is for youth ages 18 to 20½, which enables youth to work within BPD and gain experience that can count towards sworn recruitment. There is also the Explorer Program for youth ages 14 to 20, which provides youth that might be interested in the field of law enforcement with training and practical experiences. In addition, BPD partners with BCPS to attend career fairs to share information about these programs and also partners with the Urban Alliance and the Baltimore Youth Opportunity (YO!) Centers.

Second, this legislation requires certain staffing levels, which would require a reallocation of resources to meet. The legislation requires at least seven employees to administer the Public Safety Explorers Post and Public Safety Cadet Post, which would be a new cost for the City and would require reallocation of resources from other programs.

Finally, the Cadet Post program requires the hiring of 50 individuals annually, which may be an onerous criterion for the program and may not meet the needs of the agencies. Finance believes that funding for Cadet positions could be available through a partnership with YouthWorks or hiring Cadets in-lieu of full-time personnel. However, the number of positions would be based on funding levels or vacant positions, which may not align with the recruitment criterion established in the legislation.

Conclusion

While the Department of Finance agrees with the spirit and intent of this legislation, the City cannot afford additional unfunded programs at this time. In addition, the staffing, recruitment, and program design may establish criteria that do not meet the changing needs of the agencies and are too onerous. Finance is supportive of increasing recruitment opportunities for youth and the agencies, but believes that the agencies are best able to assess their needs and should have the freedom to design recruitment programs that meet those specific needs, especially as they change over time.

For the reasons stated above, the Department of Finance opposes City Council Bill 21-0094.

cc: Henry Raymond
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