


<b>FROM</b>	NAME & TITLE	Robert Cename, Budget Director <i>Robert Cename</i>	CITY of <b>BALTIMORE</b> <b>MEMO</b>	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Bureau of the Budget and Management Research Room 432, City Hall		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill 21-0112 – Charter Amendment – Supplementary Criminal Apprehension and Conviction Fund		

DATE:

**TO**

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

October 10, 2021

**Position: Oppose**

The Department of Finance is herein reporting on City Council Bill 21-0112, Charter Amendment – Supplementary Criminal Apprehension and Conviction Fund, the purpose of which is to establish a continuing, nonlapsing Supplementary Criminal Apprehension and Conviction Fund. This fund would be used exclusively to supplement rewards offered to the public for information leading to the apprehension, arrest, and conviction of criminal suspects.

**Background**

This legislation proposes establishing a fund that would support rewards offered to the public by the Baltimore Police Department or a non-profit organization for the successful apprehension, arrest, or conviction of criminal suspects. More so, the legislation allows the Mayor and City Council to finance the fund by using an annual appropriation, grants, donations, or proceeds from other revenue sources. Additionally, this measure provides that unspent funds cannot revert to general revenues or be used for any other purpose, and appropriations cannot lapse. The City currently provides support for a Metro Crime Stoppers (MCS) program that encourages and rewards individuals for providing information which results in the resolution of unsolved crimes with a cash reward of up to \$2,000. This program is funded through General Fund appropriations and budgeted for \$200,000 in Fiscal 2022.

Moreover, the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement has an agreement with MCS to implement an Illegal Gun Tip and Homicide Hotline Program. This program aims to reduce the number of civilian firearms in circulation, assist in solving homicides, and lower violent crime rates. Through this program, rewards of up to \$1,000 will be paid to persons that provide information that leads to the recovery of illegal firearms, as well as the arrest of an individual for a felony firearms charges and/or homicide.

**Fiscal Impact**

The Department of Finance is opposed to the creation of special funds, such as the proposed fund, for a variety of reasons.

First, it limits the City’s ability to access revenues during economic downturns. Mandating that funds cannot lapse, must be used for this Fund, and cannot revert to general revenues limits the City’s ability to respond to urgent fiscal needs. The ability to reallocate funds across programs and services has been vital during this time to maintain core City services and ensure a strong response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Second, to meet the requirements of this fund, the City may be required to raise additional revenue or reallocate resources from other programs and services. City tax rates are already the highest in Maryland, which limits the City's options for raising additional revenue for new programs without adding an additional burden for residents. In addition, the City faces an array of unfunded risks in the coming years, including but not limited to the pending Fire and Police pension lawsuit, Police legal liabilities, additional consent decree costs, unmet capital needs across many agencies, education funding, and surplus schools.

Additionally, establishing funds that compromise the City's ability to quickly respond to fiscal needs could be viewed negatively by bond rating agencies. Baltimore has a long history of good fiscal stewardship and Baltimore's strong fiscal management is one of the reasons why the City has never gone into default, receivership, or bankruptcy.

Finally, it may be more appropriate for an entity like the Baltimore Civic Fund to manage this special fund. The Baltimore Civic Fund operates at the intersection of government and philanthropy, allowing them to provide a unique suite of services for the City of Baltimore and community-based organizations, and would likely be more apt to assist in this endeavor. Utilizing this relationship would meet the intent of the legislation without limiting the City's ability to respond to urgent fiscal needs or placing an additional burden on residents.

### **Conclusion**

Dedicating a revenue source to a nonlapsing fund and not allowing funds to be used for any other purpose limits the City's ability to allocate resources as needed, especially during economic downturns. This could result in reduced funding for services and programs, or require that additional revenues are collected, placing an additional burden on City residents. In addition, the City currently supports two programs that already provide rewards for assistance with homicide, illegal gun, and other unsolved cases.

**For the reasons stated above, the Department of Finance opposes City Council Bill 21-0112.**

cc: Henry Raymond  
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