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Title: Request for State Action - Redirect Youth Jail Funds to Alternatives to Detention, City Recreation Centers, and Schools

FOR the purpose of requesting that the State act to address public safety concerns involving City youths in a more effective and fiscally responsible way by redirecting funds earmarked for a new youth jail towards City recreation centers instead.

Sponsors: Bill Henry, Mary Pat Clarke, Robert Curran, Carl Stokes, Sharon Green Middleton, Helen L. Holton, Warren Branch, James B. Kraft, President Young, William "Pete" Welch, Nick Mosby, Edward Reisinger

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Henry
At the request of: The Safe and Sound Campaign

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Request for State Action - Redirect Youth Jail Funds to Alternatives to Detention, City Recreation Centers, and Schools

FOR the purpose of requesting that the State act to address public safety concerns involving City youths in a more

effective and fiscally responsible way by redirecting funds earmarked for a new youth jail towards City recreation centers instead.

Recitals

The Education and Youth Committee of the Baltimore City Council held a roundtable discussion on January 19, 2012 that generated a number of ideas worth pursuing. One of the participants, the Baltimore Safe & Sound Campaign, presented the idea of reallocating State funds currently earmarked for the construction of a new youth jail in Baltimore to the City's recreation centers, public schools, and alternatives to detention (PACT Centers and Apprenticeship Training).

According to the Safe and Sound Campaign, an independent study commissioned by the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services indicated that, although the City may have a youth crime problem, it does not need a new youth jail. Existing facilities could accommodate the current population of young offenders if used more efficiently. What Baltimore does need is a reduction in the number of youths who become perpetrators or victims of crimes.

Instead of spending millions of dollars constructing an unneeded facility, the taxpayers' money could be better spent on improved recreation facilities and programs; spending that has been shown to actually reduce juvenile involvement with crime. Redirect the capital funding (\$65 million total) to rehab recreation centers with full and functional equipment and supplies (\$49.5 million), rehab for a West Side PACT Center with equipment for trade apprenticeships (\$2 million), and to fund a portion of the Transform Baltimore plan for City school buildings (\$13.5 million); and allocate the dedicated operating funds for the jail to provide staff and programming at the recreation centers and alternatives to detention (\$13 million).

This approach has an added benefit of creating hundreds of rehabilitation and construction jobs in Baltimore. But most importantly, it will help to provide the quality and accessible recreation that is essential to the healthy development of youth and the on-going wellness of adults.

Numerous studies have linked improved access to recreation opportunities to decreases in both overall crime and juvenile victimization rates. No similar benefits could be derived from the construction of an unneeded jail. If the State is serious in its desire to spend money to address public safety issues involving juveniles, it would be better served by redirecting funding from the proposed jail to recreation facilities, schools, and alternatives to detention.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council requests that the State act to address public safety concerns involving City youths in a more effective and fiscally responsible way by redirecting funds earmarked for a new youth jail towards City recreation centers instead.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to Governor, the Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the President of the Maryland Senate, the Maryland House Speaker, the Mayor, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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