



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: President Young

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Informational Hearing - BCPS CEO Search Process

FOR the purpose of requesting that members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners appear before the Council to discuss the secret search process conducted to hire a new CEO, and answer questions regarding how the search was conducted, how candidates were vetted, and how the decision on the new CEO was made.

Recitals

In December, 2015, the school board met privately with former CEO Gregory Thornton to inform him that the board would look for a new CEO beginning in January, 2016. At that point, rather than announce this news publicly so that parents and legislators could participate, the board made an intentional decision to conduct the search in secret.

The board took several steps to keep this process discrete. Its chairman, Marnell Cooper, made public comments suggesting Dr. Thornton would retain the job after the end of the 2015-2016 school year. Its members privately reached out to potential candidates. No press releases, public statements, or other communications were issued indicating to students and their parents that a search was underway.

Perhaps most distressingly, the school board worked with an as-yet-unnamed private company to pay a search firm \$36,000 to conduct the vetting process, shutting the public out of the process entirely. As the firm was paid by the private company, no public vote was needed to approve the contract, effectively shutting out all of the stakeholders in the process except the members of the school board.

A search process that raises as many questions as the one carried out by the school board unfairly

allows concerns about that process to color perceptions of the new CEO, Dr. Sonja Santelises. Dr. Santelises may well have been the most able and qualified candidate interviewed for the position. However, the covert nature of the search unfortunately lends itself to parents and legislators questioning her appointment right out of the gate.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council requests that members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners appear before it to discuss the secret search process conducted to hire a new CEO, and answer questions regarding how the search was conducted, how candidates were vetted, and how the decision on the new CEO was made.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Chair of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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