



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Holton

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Quarterly Budget Briefings

FOR the purpose of calling on the Chief of the Finance Department's Bureau of Budget and Management Research to brief the City Council on how the City's actual finances compare to its budgeted projections in a timely manner after the close of each quarter in the City's fiscal year.

Recitals

For the last several years, the City of Baltimore, like governments at all levels throughout the nation, has had to address significant gaps between projected revenues and expenditures. This trend seems likely to continue, with the Finance Department projecting shortfalls of \$52 million, \$96 million, and \$123 million over the next three fiscal years.

In order to address these shortfalls, the City Council has had to approve a variety of measures to both cut City expenses and raise additional revenue. Some of these measures have been more effective than originally estimated, and others less so.

However, due to the way that budget reporting is currently handled, it often takes quite some time before it is clear to either the public at large, or their representatives on the City Council, which measures are successful or where projections are falling short. This lack of timely information undermines the public's ability to understand the City's finances or meaningfully participate in the budget process. It also makes it more difficult for the Council to assess what further measures could best be used to ensure balanced budgets going forward.

Greater transparency about how closely actual expenditures and revenues are adhering to budget projections would greatly help to both inform and educate stakeholders throughout Baltimore about the City's financial realities. More, and better, ideas about how to address these realities could then be developed.

Accordingly, the City Council should be regularly and publically briefed about how closely the City's finances are

adhering to the budgeted projections on a quarterly basis. A mechanism for ensuring that these briefings continue in a timely manner after the close of each quarter on a permanent basis should also be developed.

In these volatile times, when events half a world away can radically alter the economy's trajectory almost overnight, and unexpected changes to State or Federal policies could substantially affect the funds available to the City at any time, the Council simply cannot afford to rely on stale projections when making decisions. More frequent updates are clearly necessary, and quarterly reports should not be unduly burdensome for the Department of Finance to arrange.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council calls on the Chief of the Finance Department's Bureau of Budget and Management Research to brief the City Council on how the City's actual finances compare to its budgeted projections in a timely manner after the close of each quarter in the City's fiscal year.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Finance Director, the Chief of the Finance Department's Bureau of Budget and Management Research, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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