



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Conaway

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

Informational Hearing - The Status of Baltimore City's Gang Violence Reduction Activities

FOR the purpose of requesting the Director of the Mayor's Coordinating Council of Criminal Justice, the Baltimore Police Commissioner, and the Chief of School Police to brief the City Council on the implementation of the Baltimore City Gang Violence Reduction Plan, the effectiveness of Project Exile in targeting Baltimore's most violent offenders, and the status of gangs in Baltimore City Schools.

Recitals

The Baltimore City Gang Violence Reduction Plan: November 15, 2006 presents a comprehensive strategy for combating gang violence that employs a citywide effort that includes Baltimore City, state and federal agencies, local service providers, community agencies, community faith-based organizations, business groups, neighborhood associations and residents, advocacy groups, academic institutions, and youth. The five interrelated strategies proposed to reduce violence and gang activity are: (1) community mobilization; (2) opportunities provision; (3) social intervention; (4) suppression; and (5) organizational change and development.

The target population for the gang violence prevention strategy, as defined by the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Association that consists of over 15,000 gang investigators nationwide, is: "A gang is a group or association of three or more persons that may have a common identifying sign, symbol, or name who individually or collectively engage in, or have engaged in criminal activity that creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Criminal activity includes juvenile acts that if committed by an adult would be a crime".

Crime statistics and gang member information presented in the Plan show that gangs have existed in some form in Baltimore for many years, are in each of the 9 police districts, and gang graffiti is evident in almost every neighborhood. The Baltimore City Schools have juvenile gangs throughout the system, students often must pass through gang territory on their way to and from school, and much of the gang activity is attributed to children joining gangs for protection. The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services reports a similar problem in that people also join gangs in prison for safety concerns. The ages of gang members range from the early teens to the late thirties, and most of identified gang members in Baltimore are male African Americans.

The September 7, 2007, Dixon Report relates the Administration's aggressive approach to reducing violent crime and confronting gangs. "Gangs are a citywide issue and good intelligence is the best weapon. The Organized Crime Division is working with federal prosecutors to dismantle gangs and drug crews. The Baltimore Police Department has the most highly evolved Gang Intelligence Unit in Maryland. This centralized unit gathers and disseminates gang intelligence information to all Baltimore City's police districts, as well as other jurisdictions, the Department of Juvenile Services, Parole and Probation, School Police and federal law enforcement. Close to 600 known gang members have been arrested this year."

In a January 27, 2009, presentation at a Juvenile Justice Briefing of the House Judiciary Committee, the Baltimore City State's Attorney reported that despite the efforts of City law enforcement and School Police: "Juvenile prosecutors have noted an increase of gang activity - gangs are associated with drug dealing, violence and recruitment - and recruitment may occur in school or on the street. We have seen more and more thefts and robberies that appear gang related, as well as an escalation of violence, including murder. Sadly, there appears to be a growing acceptance and imitation of the gang culture among juveniles, and kids are exposed at younger ages."

The State's Attorney also notes the need for a comprehensive statewide gang strategy that includes juvenile offenders and that incorporates needed statutes to allow for vigorous prosecution, but also addresses prevention and early intervention - a strategy that parallels the Baltimore City Gang Violence Reduction Plan. In order to successfully combat gangs in Baltimore City, law enforcement officials must first agree on the parameters of the existing problem, the effectiveness of current policies, and the future direction of gang violence reduction efforts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Body requests the Director of the Baltimore City Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, the Baltimore Police Commissioner, and the Chief of School Police to brief the City Council on the implementation of the Baltimore City Gang Violence Reduction Plan, the effectiveness of Project Exile in targeting Baltimore's most violent offenders, and the status of gangs in Baltimore City Schools.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Baltimore City State's Attorney, the Baltimore Police Commissioner, the Chief of School Police, the Director of the Mayor's Coordinating Council of Criminal Justice, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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