



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: President Rawlings-Blake

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Investigative Hearing - Crime Alerts - Citywide Text Messaging

FOR the purpose of requesting the Commissioner of Police to investigate the efficacy of instituting a citywide text messaging system to alert residents about criminal activity in a timely manner and to determine what crimes should be included in a citywide alert.

Recitals

In April 2008, federal regulators, acknowledging that text messages have exploded in popularity particularly among young people, approved a plan to create a nationwide emergency alert system using text messages delivered to cell phones. CTIA, the trade group for the wireless industry, informed federal officials that it is estimated that 48 billion text messages are sent each month.

The federal plan stems from the Warning Alert and Response Network Act, a 2006 federal law that requires upgrades to the emergency alert system. The Act requires the Federal Communications Commission to develop ways to alert the public about emergencies.

In November 2008, D.C. Police joined 11 other cities and 5 counties in the region that have text alert notification. While most subdivisions use the systems for traffic and weather alerts, they can be used for mass notifications for emergencies, as in the case of the D.C. Police Alert that offers a short recap of the crime, a description of the suspect, and instructions to call 911 if anyone is seen who fits the description.

In approving the federal plan, the Communications Commissioner commented: "The ability to deliver accurate and timely warnings and alerts through cell phones and other mobile services in an important next step in our efforts to help ensure that the American public has the information they need to take action to protect themselves and their families, prior to, and during disasters and other emergencies."

As law enforcement agencies balance their normal duties with the added responsibilities of Homeland Security that result from the September 11, 2001 terrorists attacks, overwhelmed police departments, too, are relying more on everyday citizens to be their eyes and ears and to assist in crime fighting efforts.

Because of Baltimore City's proximity to the nation's capital it is imperative that citizens become active partners with our police in their efforts to combat criminal activity.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Commissioner of Police is requested to investigate the efficacy of instituting a citywide text messaging system to alert residents about criminal activity in a timely manner and to determine what crimes should be included in a citywide alert.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Police Commissioner, the Director of Finance, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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