



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Curran

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning **Informational Hearing - Heroin Task Force Report**

FOR the purpose of calling on the Health Commissioner and the Co-Chairs of the Mayor's Heroin Treatment and Prevention Task Force to appear before the City Council to report on the findings and recommendations of the Heroin Treatment and Prevention Task Force.

Recitals

Heroin addiction and abuse has long been a troubling problem in Baltimore. With an estimated 18,900 individuals who use heroin in Baltimore, it can be accurately described as a public health epidemic in our city. Last year there were 192 heroin-related overdose deaths in Baltimore, a 28% increase over 2013.

In response to this crisis, Mayor Rawlings-Blake assembled a task force to closely examine the problem, measure its scope, identify shortcomings in our treatment system, and develop smart responses. In its final report, the Mayor's Heroin Treatment and Prevention Task Force called for 10 bold steps to attack the city's epidemic of heroin and opioid addiction, including having 24/7 treatment on demand for substance users and a launching a public education campaign to encourage treatment and combat stigma.

Convened by Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake in October of 2014, the Task Force was co-chaired by Bernard J. McBride, CEO of Behavioral Health System Baltimore, and Dr. Samuel Ross, CEO of Bon Secours Baltimore Health System, and was comprised of 35 stakeholders with diverse experience dealing with substance use — nonprofit leaders, academics, medical experts, public safety officials, faith leaders, business people, elected officials, and community leaders.

This inclusive process gave Task Force members a full view of the challenges posed by opioid

addiction and allowed them to accurately document the scope of the problem and identify what is being doing well and where efforts need to be improved.

As Mayor Rawlings-Blake said in introducing the report:

◆Baltimore City has the building blocks for a bright future, including strong neighborhoods, a rich history, thriving anchor institutions and vibrant cultural activities. But we also face major challenges, including problems stemming from heroin. For decades, heroin and, more recently, other opioids like prescription narcotics, have disrupted the lives of too many of our residents and damaged our communities. While we have made progress in recent years, we continue to face an urgent public health challenge.... all of us are affected [by opioid abuse]. Abuse of these drugs generates crime, strains our healthcare system and harms the quality of life for residents in many communities. In short, heroin and opioid abuse threatens all aspects of Baltimore◆s future.◆

This report is intended to serve as the City◆s blueprint for a stepped up and more effective response to the addiction epidemic. An estimated \$20 million is needed over three years to accomplish its goals. Baltimore hopes to involve private partners, as well as the state and federal government, to assist with funding for the Task Force recommendations.

Implementing all of the Task Force◆s recommendations will require will and commitment from all levels of government and our partners in the private sector. The City Council will have an important role to play in assisting and enabling these efforts, and therefore must be kept fully informed of the recommendations and the City◆s progress in implementing them.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council calls on the Health Commissioner and the Co-Chairs of the Mayor◆s Heroin Treatment and Prevention Task Force to appear before it to report on the findings and recommendations of the Heroin Treatment and Prevention Task Force.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Health Commissioner, the Chief Executive Officer of Bon Secours Baltimore Health System, the President and Chief Executive Officer of Behavioral Health System Baltimore, and the Mayor◆s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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