



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Young

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Informational Hearing - The Housing Authority of Baltimore City

FOR the purpose of requesting the Executive Director of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) to report to the City Council on the physical condition, public safety, and availability of HABC housing in Baltimore City.

Recitals

HABC was established in 1937 to provide federally-funded public housing programs and related services to low-income residents. It is the 5th largest public housing authority in the country, with an annual budget of approximately \$300 million, and provides services to over 20,000 residents in more than 10,000 units. HABC's inventory includes 28 family developments, 17 mixed population buildings, 2 senior buildings and scattered sites throughout the City. The voucher program provides an additional 12,000 families with rental housing subsidies each year.

Over the years the City Council has monitored conditions of public housing to make certain that it is properly maintained and that the residents are receiving services mandated by the federal government. In 2001, the Council requested the Commissioner of Housing to report on the status of boarded-up and dilapidated public housing. That same year a report on the approximately 9,664 Section 8 rental units under lease and 5,384 unoccupied units was requested.

In January 2003, a resolution entitled "Lakeview Towers - A Haven or A Towering Inferno" was introduced following a fire in a twin-tower senior public housing high-rise complex on Druid Park Drive that left 1 person dead, 13 injured, and drove many frightened and confused elderly residents out of their homes in the frigid winter air. At that time it came to light that there was no sprinkler system in the building at 727 Druid Park Drive.

In April 2003, concerns about the non-elderly mentally ill and substance abusers living in senior public housing prompted the "Open Forum - Public Housing for the Elderly" that called for a review of the policy. "Since the Fair Housing Act of 1988, younger chronically mentally ill and substance abusing persons have been admitted to subsidized senior housing. Although the policy was meant, in part, to promote age integration, improve social engagement, and enhance informal support, younger persons with disabilities have proven to be incompatible neighbors, diminishing the quality of life for seniors and creating management problems for facility staff."

In 2004, “An Open Forum: Is Baltimore’s Housing in Order” examined the status of privately-owned, market-rate rental, public, and Section 8/Choice Voucher rental housing in the City to determine if there was an adequate supply of decent housing in safe neighborhoods for Baltimore City residents of all income levels, to discover the impact of gentrification in the displacement of low-and middle income residents from neighborhoods in transition, and to ascertain if there was a clustering of public housing in certain lower socio-economic neighborhoods while housing opportunities were being limited in more affluent neighborhoods.

In 2006, “Informational Hearing - The Status of Public Housing In Baltimore City” once again requested the Commissioner, in his role as Executive Director of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, to report to the Council on the status of public housing, to provide an assessment of the trends in the public housing needs of low-income residents, to report court proceedings regarding former and current residents of public housing whose children were harmed by exposure to lead paint, and to analyze the impact of local and federal court rulings on the future of public housing demographics in Baltimore City and the surrounding counties.

This sampling of resolutions represents just a few of the concerns expressed by City Council members. While the old high rise “projects” no longer exist, some of these same problems persist and seem, even, to have followed residents of public housing to their new accommodations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Executive Director of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) is requested to report to the City Council on the physical condition, public safety, and availability of HABC housing in Baltimore City.

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

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