



Legislation Text

File #: 17-0039R, Version: 0

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The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.

Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Middleton

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

Stepping Up Initiative to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jails

For the purpose of joining the Call to Action to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in our jails, committing to sharing lessons learned with other jurisdictions in Maryland and across the country to support a national initiative, and encouraging all of our private sector partners, City agencies, and local non-profits to participate in Stepping Up.

Recitals

Whereas, local jurisdictions routinely provide treatment services to the estimated 2 million people with serious mental illnesses booked into jail each year.

Whereas, prevalence rates of serious mental illnesses in jails are three to six times higher than for the general population.

Whereas, almost three-quarters of adults with serious mental illnesses in jails have co-occurring substance use disorders.

Whereas, adults with mental illnesses tend to stay longer in jail and upon release are at a higher risk of recidivism than people without these disorders.

Whereas, local jails spend two to three times more on adults with mental illnesses that require interventions compared to those without these treatment needs.

Whereas, without the appropriate treatment and services, people with mental illnesses continue to cycle through the criminal justice system, often resulting in tragic outcomes for these individuals and their families.

Whereas, Baltimore City, and all local jurisdictions, takes pride in their responsibility to protect and enhance the health, welfare, and safety of its residents in efficient and cost-effective ways.

Whereas, through the Stepping Up Initiative, the National Association of Counties, the Council of State Governments Justice Center, and the American Psychiatric Foundation are encouraging public, private, and non-profit partners to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails.

Whereas, The Stepping Up Initiative includes a 6 point Call to Action asking for local jurisdictions to:

- Convene or draw on a diverse team of leaders and decision makers from multiple agencies committed to safely reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in jails.
- Collect and review prevalence numbers and assess individuals' needs to better identify adults entering jails with mental illnesses and their recidivism risk, and use that baseline information to guide decision making at the system, program, and case levels.
- Examine treatment and service capacity to determine which programs and services are available in the jurisdiction for people with mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders, and identify state and local policy and funding barriers to minimizing contact with the justice system and providing treatment and supports in the community.
- Develop a plan with measurable outcomes that draws on the jail assessment and prevalence data and the examination of available treatment and service capacity, while considering identified barriers.
- Implement research-based approaches that advance the plan.
- Create a process to track progress using data and information systems, and to report on successes.

Whereas, Baltimore City supports this Call to Action and the goals of the Stepping Up Initiative.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, that the Council joins the Call to Action to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in our jails, commits to sharing lessons learned with other jurisdictions in Maryland and across the country to support a national initiative, and encourages all of our private sector partners, City agencies, and local non-profits to participate in Stepping Up.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Health Commissioner, the Police Commissioner, the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.