



Legislation Text

File #: 19-0180R, Version: 0

* **Warning:** This is an unofficial, introductory copy of the bill.
The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.

Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Sneed

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning
Diversity of Programming

For the purpose of urging Comcast to comply with its franchise obligation to maximize the diversity of programming over the Comcast System.

Recitals

Whereas, In granting a franchise to provide cable services in the City of Baltimore, an enumerated principle objective was to “maximize the diversity of programming over the Comcast System. . .”;

Whereas, The franchise agreement requires Comcast to “not discriminate among Subscribers with respect to fees, charges, deposits, and other terms and conditions affecting any Service. . .”;

Whereas, Disputes between programmers and video distribution platforms are becoming prolific, creating uncertainty in consumer access and the bargained value of long-term consumer commitments;

Whereas, The City of Baltimore and its residents continue to highly value a robust media landscape, inclusive of diverse voices and perspectives;

Whereas, The City of Baltimore is concerned about Comcast’s recent behavior regarding consumers, exemplified by actions taken against the company by the FCC, the National Advertising Reviewing Board, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Washington, and specifically about the company’s behavior as it relates to diversity, including Comcast’s inadequate fulfillment of the NBCUniversal diversity conditions;

Whereas, According to recent press reports, Comcast is in active disputes with programming channels that offer content particularly viewed by diverse audiences, including Byron Allen’s collection of channels, Starz, and BeIN Sports;

Whereas, Offering channels that reflect diverse perspectives through expensive *a la carte* offerings while including other channels in widely available packages may create inappropriate barriers that reduce access to diverse programming; and

Whereas, Comcast's consumer contract locks the consumer into long-term commitments, with penalties for early cancellation, even if Comcast removes or reduces access to channels integral to the purchasing decision of the consumer, while increasing the consumer's rates annually and keeping the savings without returning them to the consumer.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the City Council urges Comcast to comply with its franchise obligation to maximize the diversity of programming over the Comcast System.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Senior Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary of Comcast, the Chief Digital Operator/CIO of the Mayor's Office of Information Technology, the City Solicitor, the 2020 Baltimore City Delegation to the United States Congress, the Maryland Attorney General, the Assistant Attorney General of the United States Department of Justice Antitrust Division, the Chairman of the United States Federal Trade Commission, the United States Federal Communications Commission's Chairman, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.