



Legislation Text

File #: 13-0138R, **Version:** 0

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: President Young

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day - December 21, 2013

FOR the purpose of recognizing December 21, 2013 as National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day in Baltimore City to bring attention to the struggle of people experiencing homelessness; to mourn the passing of our neighbors who, in life, lacked stable housing; and to rededicate ourselves to ending the conditions that create and maintain homelessness - poverty, a dearth of housing available to low-income households, and a lack of health and supportive services.

Recitals

For nearly two and a half decades, communities across the country have come together on or near December 21 □ the first day of winter and longest night of the year □to bring attention to the tragedy of homelessness and to remember our homeless neighbors and friends who have paid the ultimate price for our nation's failure to end homelessness. Baltimore City joins the National Coalition for the Homeless, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, and the National Consumer Advisory Board, local homeless service providers, and people throughout the country □both housed and homeless □in recognizing Homeless Persons' Memorial Day and rededicating itself to preventing and ending homelessness.

Nationally, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) official "homeless count", at least 630,000 people find themselves in shelters, on the streets, or in other places unfit for human habitation on any given night in the United States □a number that does not include the many who are unstably "doubled up" with family and friends. Over the course of the year, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty estimates that more than 3 million people experience homelessness □including 1.3 million children, the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness.

In Baltimore City, recent counts of people experiencing homelessness have reported between 2,600 and 4,100 people experiencing homelessness on any given night □a fraction of the number served annually by the City's homeless service providers.

While the limited number of people counted both nationally and locally vary by year and methodology, the conditions that create homelessness remain steadfast. Nearly one-four Baltimoreans live below the federal poverty line approximately \$11,500 for a single individual, and \$23,500 for a family of four. One third of Baltimore's children live below the poverty line.

For households struggling in or near poverty, basic needs in particular, housing are often out of reach. The Fair Market Rent for an efficiency unit in Baltimore City is \$846, which is affordable to full-time workers earning over \$16.27 an hour over twice the minimum wage. Households earning minimum wage need 3.3 full-time jobs to afford a 2-bedroom unit at Fair Market Rent in Baltimore. For people with disabilities, receiving \$710 monthly in federal SSI benefits or \$185 a month in state temporary disability assistance, housing costs far exceed income.

According to recent local counts of people experiencing homelessness, the three top health concerns that impact the homeless population in the City of Baltimore are substance abuse, mental health, and chronic illness. A 2005 study by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council found that this "tr morbidity" of substance abuse and mental illness together with chronic health problems increases the risk of early death. Indeed, people experiencing homelessness are 3 to 4 times more likely to die prematurely than their housed counterparts and have an average life expectancy of between 42 and 52 years old.

Increased access to health insurance for people living in or near poverty through Medicaid expansion will provide greater opportunities for comprehensive health care for this vulnerable population; however, the most critical health condition faced by this population namely, homelessness itself can be addressed only by increasing the availability of affordable housing.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council hereby recognizes December 21, 2013 as National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day in Baltimore City to bring attention to the struggle of people experiencing homelessness; to mourn the passing of our neighbors who, in life, lacked stable housing; and to rededicate ourselves to ending the conditions that create and maintain homelessness poverty, a dearth of housing available to low-income households, and a lack of health and supportive services.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the President & CEO of Health Care for the Homeless, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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