



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmembers Clarke and Middleton

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

Request for State Action - Restore Senior Center Operating Fund Cuts

FOR the purpose of calling on the Maryland Department of Aging to immediately reverse the more than two-thirds cut to Baltimore's Senior Center Operating Funds award and restore FY 2016 funding levels to at least those awarded in FY 2015 to avoid further endangering the health and well-being of our vulnerable elderly population.

Recitals

The Senior Center Operating Funds (SCOF) program provides money from the Maryland Department of Aging to be distributed across the board to for-profit, non-profit, and city-operated senior centers to cover operations and programming. Last year, Baltimore was provided with \$146,000 in SCOF support that was distributed to 15 senior centers throughout the City.

However, after finding that Baltimore does not qualify as a distressed jurisdiction the Maryland Department of Aging cut this year's grant by more than two-thirds to only \$45,000, putting many critical programs for seniors at risk. If the full funding is not restored it will lead to cuts in budgets for transportation, utilities, supplies, and contractual services such as classes that will fall particularly hard on non-profit senior centers.

Many senior center participants are on limited incomes, and most of them could not afford to join a gym or private club to have access to the activities that will have to be cut. Research shows how important social contact and exercise for both the body and the mind are for keeping aging adults healthy and independent. The impacted centers provide all of these at a low cost. Reducing or eliminating these programs can be expected to have significant and long-term negative impacts on the health and well-being of our seniors. Not only is this inhumane, it's likely to drive up the societal costs of caring for these aging adults by far more than the amount that Baltimore's SCOF funds have been cut. Simply put, it's penny wise and pound foolish to cut funds for programs that keep our seniors fit and healthy.

This latest cut comes on top of years of cuts in funding for Baltimore's seniors from state and federal sources despite the fact that 41% of Maryland's elderly population living in poverty reside in Baltimore City. The situation is becoming untenable as centers serving our impoverished elders are repeatedly asked to do more with less. Our senior centers simply cannot continue to sustain these cuts without doing real harm to our parents and grandparents who are most in need of support.

Our seniors deserve our support and respect. They don't deserve to have their health and well-being endangered because of cost-cutting efforts or obscure bureaucratic formulas. We should be putting more resources into senior centers rather than constantly taking resources away from them. At the very least, these most recent SCOF cuts must be restored as a down payment on showing our elders the respect they deserve.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council calls on the Maryland Department of Aging to immediately reverse the more than two-thirds cut to Baltimore's Senior Center Operating Funds award and restore FY 2016 funding levels to at least those awarded in FY 2015 to avoid further endangering the health and well-being of our vulnerable elderly population.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Aging, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the Health Commissioner, the Mayor, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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