



Legislation Text

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Introduced by: Councilmember Costello

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

Budget Oversight Hearings for Baltimore City Public Schools

For the purpose of calling for regular budget oversight hearings for Baltimore City Public Schools to improve transparency and accountability in the allocation of over a billion dollars in public funding for the vital task of educating Baltimore's children.

Recitals

Each year the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners independently assembles a roughly \$1.3 billion budget for Baltimore City Public Schools. And each year the City Council is required to vote to approve this budget. Furthermore, Baltimore City Public Schools is facing a \$129 million deficit in fiscal year 2018.

However, the Council, and through it the public, is often provided with very little meaningful information about this huge and vitally important expenditure. Even more troubling, the budget information that is provided to the Council is sometimes unclear or misleading.

Educating our community's children is one of the most important tasks imaginable. It requires, and deserves, the mobilization of vast resources from all levels of government and the private sector. It also requires, and deserves, genuine transparency and accountability in the process of allocating those resources. The current school budget process doesn't do enough to advance those values and must be updated to allow the City Council to be informed and engaged in reviewing budget decisions on behalf of Baltimore's citizens.

Instead of simply being handed a document full of numbers to approve once a year with complex explanations and insufficient time to fully vet, the Council should be involved year round in the decisions about how to best make use of the City's limited resources to effectively educate our children. Regular hearings about budget priorities should be held before the Council throughout the year bringing together school officials, parents, teachers, and other education stakeholders for robust and meaningful discussions about how we can best help our children to achieve all they are capable of.

Regularly hosting these kinds of discussions would allow the Council to more effectively consider the annual school budget with the interests of all Baltimoreans in mind. They would also provide BCPS officials with an opportunity to better respond to the concerns of their community when making the many decisions that are embodied in the annual budget.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Council calls for regular budget oversight hearings for Baltimore City Public Schools to improve transparency and accountability in the allocation of over a billion dollars in public funding for the vital task of educating Baltimore's children..

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, the Chair of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.